United Nations S/PV.5945

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5945th meeting

Tuesday, 29 July 2008, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Bui The Giang	(Viet Nam)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Brown
	United States of America	Mr. McBride

Agenda

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

Seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2008/451)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-44211 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

Seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2008/451)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Djédjé (Côte d'Ivoire) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/486, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Belgium, Burkina Faso, France and South Africa. Members also have before them document S/2008/451, which contains the seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall now put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Indonesia, Italy, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Panama, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1826 (2008).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.5946

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5946th meeting

Wednesday, 30 July 2008, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Le Luong Minh	(Viet Nam)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Collard
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff

Agenda

The situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia

Special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (S/2008/226)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-44376 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Expression of farewell to Mr. Marcello Spatafora, Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations

The President: As this is the last time that Ambassador Marcello Spatafora will participate in a Council meeting in his capacity as Permanent Representative of Italy, I wish to take this opportunity to express to him, on behalf of the members of the Council, our appreciation of him, both as a colleague and as a friend. Ambassador Spatafora's diplomatic skill, affable manner and sense of collegiality have made him a highly effective representative of his country. His distinguished career has been characterized by many challenging postings, where he has always endeavoured to build bridges and achieve better understanding.

Ambassador Spatafora will be remembered as a fervent advocate of the work of the Council who always strived to work in cooperation and harmony with other Council members. His remarkable contributions to the work of the Council and the passion he has put into his work by speaking straight from his heart will always be remembered by his colleagues with gratitude.

In bidding Ambassador Spatafora a fond farewell, the other members of the Council and I wish him every success in his new undertakings.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I thank you very much, Mr. President, for your words. To you and to all my colleagues and friends around this table go my most sincere thanks for the friendship and the cooperation that have been offered me. Thanks to all the members of the Council, my experience in the Security Council has been very rewarding.

There have been a lot of challenges and achievements. There has also been, unfortunately, a lot of frustration when we have not succeeded in delivering what the outside world, especially those who are the most vulnerable and those who suffer on the ground, was expecting from us and from the United Nations.

There is indeed an ever-increasing demand by the people of the world for a more effective Security Council action and presence. Expectations to that end are very high and important challenges are ahead of this Council. I believe that the best way for the Council to be successful in addressing the issues before it, however difficult and sensitive they may be, is first of all to strengthen its listening culture. That listening culture should be more open and receptive to the feelings and values prevailing among the members in general and among interested parties in particular. We sit here around this table on behalf of all United Nations Member States, and if we do not nurture within the membership at large a perception of ownership of the Security Council's proceedings, then it will be difficult at the end of the day to have implementation and compliance, because implementation and compliance will be there only if ownership is preserved at the same time.

There should be no surprise that Article 25 of the Charter concerning the binding nature of the decisions of the Council, is fading from our radar screen. The listening culture that I was referring to implies that we have to make every possible effort to understand each other. To do so is a sign of strength, not of weakness. If we listen and understand, it will be easier to work together with equal dignity and mutual respect, which are building blocks towards effectiveness and results-oriented action.

We must never lose sight of the fact that what matters most at the end of the day is to be able to deliver and have an impact on the ground, so that the Security Council will make a difference and be perceived as doing so. What is at stake is our credibility and our relevance, and I am grateful to all my colleagues here for how we have managed to make some progress along the path before us in preventing the progressive irrelevance and marginalization of this Council, a situation in which all of us in the international community at large would be losers.

For me, these 19 months in the Security Council have been months in which I have learned a lot. I have been indeed fortunate to work together with the entire Council on so many challenging and sensitive issues along a common path towards our common and shared objectives. I will take with me a lot of memories and, I suppose, a lot of nostalgia too.

Allow me to conclude by quoting from a farewell letter that my wife and I received from the United Nations African Mothers Association, an important association that is very close to our hearts. The letter, signed by the President of the Association,

Mrs. Kumalo, the wife of the Permanent Representative of South Africa, recalls that "in Africa we say mountains never meet, but people who have ever crossed each others' path are likely to meet again". With those words, I say farewell to all of my friends here, and I urge them to take care of themselves and of their loved ones. I will not forget them.

The President: I thank Ambassador Spatafora for his statement. Once again, I wish him all the best.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia

Special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (S/2008/226)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/491, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Belgium. Members also have before them document S/2008/226, containing the special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and document S/2008/496, containing a letter dated 28 July 2008 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Indonesia, Italy, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Panama, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1827 (2008).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): The end of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), eight years after its creation and eight years after the end of the war between the two countries, is an important decision for the Security Council.

The border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea remains unresolved, and the United Nations is withdrawing without having been able to help the two countries find common ground, but not without having tried everything possible to achieve that. Neither the good offices of the Secretary-General nor the constructive proposals presented to the parties by the Council were able to attain their objective.

Unfortunately, the work of UNMEE is coming to an end not because its mandate has been accomplished, but because that mandate has become impossible to carry out. As a peacekeeping mission, UNMEE was increasingly restricted in its freedom of movement by Eritrea, to the point that it was compelled to leave the buffer zone that it was initially supposed to monitor. As an administrative and logistical support mission for border demarcation, UNMEE was also hindered in fulfilling that area of its mandate by Ethiopia's refusal to implement the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission.

The responsibility for the current impasse rests with the parties and with them alone. Only they can decide to emerge from the vicious circle by ending the fruitless game of mutual accusations and by choosing the path of dialogue, in the primary interest of their populations and in the interest of peace in the Horn of Africa. The international community remains ready to assist them in doing so.

Despite the substantive impasse, Belgium, like the vast majority of other Council members, would have preferred to maintain a United Nations presence on the ground as a tangible signal of the availability of the United Nations to work for a balanced and lasting solution. In fact, the two countries reject such a presence.

Belgium hopes that, once the tension created by the turmoil surrounding UNMEE and its future has abated, an atmosphere more conducive to dialogue will emerge. The resolution that we have just adopted calls on the Secretary-General to continue his efforts and to keep the Council regularly informed.

The Algiers Agreements and the decisions of the Boundary Commission remain the legal basis upon which dialogue will have to be built. The Council calls firmly on Ethiopia and Eritrea to cooperate in the process of terminating UNMEE and to scrupulously avoid any hindrance to the smooth functioning of that process.

As the Mission closes, Belgium gratefully thanks the troop-contributing countries and all the military and civilian personnel involved in its work.

The President: Before adjourning this meeting, I should like, on behalf of the Council, to express sincere thanks to all the men and women who have served the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea over the past seven years for their dedication and professionalism in carrying out the mandate entrusted to them by the Security Council.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.5947

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5947th meeting

Thursday, 31 July 2008, 9.40 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr Le Luong Minh	(Viet Nam)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2008/443)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-44474 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 9.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2008/443)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Sudan in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) took the seat reserved for him at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/506, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Members also have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur in document S/2008/443.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Indonesia, Italy, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Panama, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Viet Nam

Against:

None

Abstaining:

United States of America

The President: The result of the voting is as follows: 14 votes in favour, none against and 1 abstention. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 1828 (2008).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): May I begin by saying that the United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of resolution 1828 (2008) by the Security Council today and that, as the informal coordinator of the resolution, I am very grateful to all Council members for their help. We came very close to achieving a consensus, and I regret that it was only lack of time, really, that prevented us from being able to address the outstanding concerns of one delegation.

I want to make two fundamental points about today's discussions. The first is that the entire Council, we believe, is behind the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and wants it to succeed. I think that will become clear in the statements that we are making after this vote.

When in 2007 the Security Council first mandated the African Union-United Nations force in Darfur, we made a commitment to help bring security to the people of Darfur. We have renewed that commitment today. It is not a commitment that we take lightly. The recent attack in which seven peacekeepers were killed was a grim reminder of the difficulties and dangers that UNAMID peacekeepers face daily. I pay tribute once again to those who died. We owe it to them and to their colleagues to renew our efforts for peace and stability in Darfur, throughout Sudan and throughout the region.

The second point I want to make about today's discussions is that no position has been taken by the

Security Council on the question of whether to take any action in the light of the proposal of the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to indict President Al-Bashir. That issue is to be addressed on another day.

Let me be clear about the United Kingdom's position. The United Kingdom did not believe that it was right to consider such an important issue as part of a resolution renewing UNAMID's mandate. It was of course the Security Council that decided in resolution 1593 (2005) that the situation in Darfur warranted investigation by the ICC. We will not stand in the way of a Security Council discussion of whether there is a case for invoking article 16 of the Rome Statute in relation to President Al-Bashir, but that discussion will raise profound questions about the relationship between peace and justice. It is not something that the Security Council should rush into.

Building on the support for today's resolution, the Security Council and the Secretariat are facing three tasks in the future. First, we should do all we can to accelerate UNAMID's deployment. This resolution endorses the Secretary-General's target of having 80 per cent of the force in place by the end of this year, that is, in five months' time. We all know the obstacles, but much more needs to be done to overcome them.

Secondly, the Council has to give its unstinting support to the political process. We very much welcome the appointment of Mr. Bassolé as Chief Mediator; he has our full backing.

Thirdly, the Council will need to continue considering the important issues of justice and impunity in Darfur. Article 16 of the ICC Statute will be part of that discussion, but it will not be only the part. Sudan's lack of cooperation with the ICC will also be directly relevant, as will other factors.

The Council's discussions on Darfur have made clear that, while there are different views on tackling the issue of impunity, our support for UNAMID and the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union to bring security and stability to Darfur is unstinting. Those efforts are central to the pursuit of peace in Darfur, and the Security Council cannot give up on that goal. It is still some way off. It will require patience, determination and a willingness to grapple with difficult decisions along the way, but peace is attainable, and we must continue to strive for it.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation has consistently supported the efforts of the international community to resolve the situation in the Sudanese province of Darfur. The activities of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) have become an inseparable component of the Darfur peace process, and their significance cannot be overestimated. Moreover, UNAMID is a good example of close, practical cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in the area of peacekeeping in Africa. Accordingly, we deemed it necessary not just to support but to insist on the timely adoption of the draft resolution extending the mandate of UNAMID.

However, we have serious concerns about the possible negative development of events in the Sudan following the application of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to the judges of the ICC requesting the issuance of a warrant to arrest the President of the Sudan. We do not rule out the possibility that hardline rebel groups hampering progress in the Darfur political process will take advantage of the situation in order to step up their campaign against the Government of Sudan in this region. Concern in that respect has been expressed by senior Secretariat officials. The United Nations partner in UNAMID, the African Union, stated that it was advisable for the Council to exercise its authority under article 16 of the Rome Statute of ICC to defer the decision of the Court. A similar position is held by the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States. States members of those authoritative organizations represent quite simply the views of two thirds of the international community.

Unfortunately, that concern was not fully reflected in the resolution as a result of resistance by a number of Security Council members. The position taken by those delegations could have unforeseen and negative consequences in the context of building relations between the Government of the Sudan and the international community to conduct a peacekeeping operation and to resolve the conflict in Darfur. The responsibility for those consequences fully rests on their shoulders.

We fully agree with the need for justice to be done in Darfur, including against persons indicted of heinous crimes. It must be done, however, without

neglecting other equally important factors that could have an impact on the stability of an important region of Africa. We hope that the Security Council will continue its search for the best balance between peace and justice in Darfur. That was precisely the appeal made by the Secretary-General.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica views this meeting as an important occasion. We have just adopted a resolution, the text of which renews the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the commitment of this Council to peace in that region.

We always took part in the negotiations with the purpose of ensuring that the resolution include all the elements necessary for UNAMID to meet its objectives. In the course of the negotiations, we stated our opposition to the inclusion of elements that had no direct bearing on the Mission and that should have been addressed on a different occasion and in different circumstances.

We would have liked the resolution to spell out the role that justice should play, in the Council's view, in resolving the conflict in the Sudan. That is why we supported the original text, which referred to the presidential statement of 16 June 2008. However, we have voted in favour of a text that does not include that reference but that, in the first preambular paragraph, reaffirms all previous resolutions and presidential statements adopted by the Council on the situation in the Sudan. As far as Costa Rica is concerned, that paragraph unconditionally reaffirms the presidential statement of 16 June 2008, in which the Council unanimously reaffirmed resolution 1593 (2005) and its request to the Government of the Sudan to honour its obligations stemming from that resolution, including that of cooperating with the International Criminal Court.

My delegation welcomes the fact that the resolution we have just adopted maintains the Council's commitment to bring to justice those who have violated the rights of the most vulnerable in that conflict.

We also would have liked to include in the text a reference to other peacekeeping missions performing their tasks in countries bordering the Sudan. As on other occasions, we have advocated a regional approach that responds to the needs of the Sudan as a whole and takes into account the problems of neighbouring countries, the conflicts of which influence and determine the course of those in the Sudan.

In conclusion, we would like to make it very clear that we agreed to omit explicit reference in the resolution to elements that are important to us and vital for resolving the situation in the Sudan for the sake of unity in the Council and in order to ensure that UNAMID can carry out its mandate.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia): The Security Council has now adopted resolution 1828 (2008) authorizing the extension of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) for another year. That is an outcome reached through extensive dialogue and consultations by members of the Security Council and the result of Council members' wishes to seek common ground, which unfortunately did not result in a much-desired consensus.

Croatia wanted the resolution to provide a swift and unambiguous extension to the mandate of UNAMID with the goal of achieving its planned 80 per cent deployment by year's end. UNAMID is currently the largest and most expensive United Nations operation and, as such, should command the unanimous support of the Council and requires clear guidance in order to make its logistics and deployment possible. Croatia strongly believes that that is crucial for the safety, security and well-being of the people of Darfur — the same people who have been suffering in the most horrific ways for simply far too long. The protection of those people is the main objective of the deployment of UNAMID and that is the primary reason that we voted for the adoption of the resolution, notwithstanding its being burdened by some important but unrelated additional elements.

That brings me to my main point, the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan with the International Criminal Court, which has been the source of some controversy and contention, even more so as references to it have been included in the resolution in question.

On behalf of my delegation, allow me to make the following observation. Croatia itself was the victim of brutal aggression in the early 1990s. If the recent history of our region has taught us anything, we can say with some certainty that impunity for war crimes does not bring stability to any conflict, but rather prolongs the realization of political settlements. If

anything, we have learned that the best foundation for real and sustainable peace based on reconciliation is justice and justice alone.

Another lesson learned that should be reiterated here is that war crimes are an individual responsibility and that people, not nations or ethnic groups, commit them. For that reason, Croatia has supported and continues to offer its full support for the work of the International Criminal Court and its Prosecutor. We see the Court as an independent body and do not wish to see any impediment to its free and independent work. We also understand that resolution 1828 (2008) reaffirms the text of the presidential statement of 16 June 2008, which clearly states that the Government of the Sudan should cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court in order to put an end to impunity for the crimes committed in Darfur.

On a final note, when considering the complexity of the problem in Darfur, in the Sudan and in the subregion, Croatia has also advocated a regional approach to the region's problems. For that reason, we have always welcomed and encouraged cooperation between the United Nations and African Union-led mission in the Sudan and neighbouring countries, and we would have liked to have seen the final text of the resolution make reference to those efforts.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Security Council has just adopted a resolution on the extension of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). It is an important resolution. Its adoption has provided the basic guarantee for the successful implementation of the mandate of the largest international peacekeeping operation in the history of the United Nations. It is on those grounds that the Chinese delegation voted in favour of the resolution.

The issue of the Sudan has attracted the enormous attention of the international community in recent years. All parties have come to understand that the peace and stability of the Sudan, an important country on the African continent, has an impact on the peace and stability of the region and the continent as a whole that cannot be ignored. The Sudan is a country with a large territory, many neighbours and complicated historical, religious, economic and social issues. It has endured protracted wars and disputes.

However, in recent years, thanks to the concerted efforts of the Sudanese Government and all political forces in the country, and with the generous assistance of the international community, the Sudan has achieved notable progress in the peace process. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signified the end of the decades-long war between the North and the South. People have every reason to expect that the Sudan will finally embark on the right track of peace and development.

The tremendous potential for development should not only enable the Sudan to feed and clothe its people and bring them a happy life, but also make it possible to contribute to peace and development in Africa as a whole, which is in the common interest of the international community. So long as they are conducive to the peace process in the Sudan, all efforts that help improve North-South relations in the country, facilitate the settlement of the Darfur issue and promote harmony between the various political parties deserve the generous support of the international community.

As part of the Sudan's domestic problems, the Darfur issue has been at the centre of the international spotlight in recent years. The Hybrid Operation in Darfur, jointly carried out by the United Nations and the African Union, is a mission involving huge investment and of unprecedented size. Its success not only concerns the early stabilization of the security situation in Darfur and the smooth delivery of humanitarian assistance on the ground, but also has an impact on the safety and security of the tens of thousands of international peacekeepers in the country.

Moreover, the fundamental solution to the Darfur issue lies in political negotiations. Without sincere political consensus of all parties in Darfur on the pursuit of peace, there can be no peace in the region, no matter how many international peacekeepers the United Nations sends to the region. The successes and failures of international peacekeeping operations in recent years have shown repeatedly that a basic prerequisite for the success of any international peacekeeping mission is to seek the appreciation and cooperation of the Government and the people of the country concerned. Without that prerequisite, international peacekeeping operations, no matter how meticulously designed, can experience setbacks and even failure.

Through several years of exploration, the international community has deepened its thinking on the Darfur issue and has gradually formed consensus

on basic approaches such as the dual-track strategy and the tripartite mechanism. The core of that approach is to give equal emphasis to the political process and the deployment of peacekeepers in an effort to establish a political mechanism of mutual trust and cooperation among United Nations, the African Union and the Sudanese Government, with particular emphasis on promoting the Sudanese Government's cooperation initiative. Those successful mechanisms have been important for the progress made so far and, thus, should be fully respected and supported by all parties.

The Darfur issue is very complicated. The international effort for its settlement involves various elements. To achieve desirable results and win the genuine support of the people of the Sudan and Africa, it is necessary to manage the overall balance and priorities of political negotiations, the deployment of peacekeepers, humanitarian relief, economic development and justice, and to move forward steadily with good coordination among all parties. Only in that way can the course of international peacekeeping continue along the correct path with healthy progress.

Any imprudent and hasty action that disregards the objective conditions, despite its good intentions, cannot gain the approval and support of the international community. At present, the parties concerned are striving to find a political solution to the Darfur issue, but no progress will be possible without the full cooperation of the Sudanese Government. The indictment of the Sudanese leader proposed by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is an inappropriate decision taken at an inappropriate time. It will seriously undermine the atmosphere of mutual political trust and cooperation between the United Nations and the Sudanese Government, fuel the arrogance of the rebel groups not willing in the political process and harm the fragile and turbulent security situation in Darfur.

The proposed indictment therefore inevitably came under extensive criticism from many countries, represented by important international organizations such as the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement. That deserves the Security Council's full attention and respect. China is of the view that seeking to resolve the issue of impunity through the indictment of the Sudanese leader by the ICC will only derail the process of resolving the Darfur issue, and even render useless all efforts made so far by all parties for the proper settlement of the issue.

The Security Council bears the political responsibility for the overall peace process in the Sudan. It must approach the issue from the political perspective to ensure that the overall interests of the political process and the peacekeeping deployment in Darfur are not compromised.

Recently, during the consultations on the text of the draft resolution on the extension of the mandate of UNAMID, many members of the Council expressed insightful views that China fully endorses. China supports the reasonable request by the African Union and other organizations for the Council to take early action to suspend the indictment of the Sudanese leader by the ICC, in accordance with the relevant provisions.

The Chinese Government has done a great deal of work to push for the settlement of the Darfur issue. Chinese peacekeepers are already on the front line of the international peacekeeping operation in Darfur. At present, all the engineering contingents participating in the mission in Darfur have been deployed. The Chinese Government is duty-bound to create favourable conditions for them to carry out the international peacekeeping mission safely and smoothly. I solemnly pledge that the Chinese Government will work with the rest of the international community to push for an early settlement of the Darfur issue and to contribute to the peace, stability and development of Darfur.

Mr. Mubarak (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to commend the delegation of the United Kingdom for its tremendous effort in preparing today's draft resolution on the extension of the mandate of African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) for a further 12 months, until 31 July 2009. We express our deep gratitude for the United Kingdom delegation's sterling conduct of the consultations on the draft resolution. My delegation participated in the consultations based on the general understanding that the basic purpose of the draft resolution was to extend UNAMID's mandate, taking into account the technical aspects relevant to completing the effective deployment of the mission, as expected and as stipulated in resolution 1769 (2007), without going into the new elements that are to be considered on their own tracks.

From the beginning of the consultations, the draft resolution contained elements referring to the principles of justice and combating impunity for the crimes committed in Darfur — principles on which all members of the Council agree. However, the content of those elements were conflated with recent measures taken by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The implications of those measures and the fears and concerns that they have aroused within and outside the Sudan have been expressed by several regional organizations, including the African Union, the Organization's main partner in UNAMID; the League of Arab States; and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. That is what led the delegations of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, South Africa and Burkina Faso, with the support of the delegations of other Council members, to propose amendments to the draft resolution based on the positions adopted by those regional organizations regarding the possible repercussions of those measures, which could undermine current peace efforts in Darfur and further complicate the situation in the Sudan and the entire region.

We asked that language be included in the draft resolution requesting the Security Council to call on the ICC to defer its consideration of the application made by the Prosecutor on the basis of the provisions of article 16 of the Rome Statute, which gives the Security Council the authority to request the ICC to defer any investigation or prosecution for 12 months. The proposal was drafted to reflect the language set out in the communiqué of the 142nd meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council, issued on 21 July 2008, which stated that the search for justice should be pursued in a way that does not impede or jeopardize efforts aimed at promoting lasting peace and expressed concern at the misuse of indictments against African leaders, in conformity with its decision on the abuse of the principle of universal jurisdiction, adopted at the eleventh ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, held at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 30 June and 1 July 2008.

The African Union Peace and Security Council expressed its conviction that, in view of the delicate nature of the processes under way in the Sudan, approval by the Pretrial Chamber of the application by the ICC Prosecutor could seriously undermine the ongoing efforts to facilitate the early resolution of the conflict and the promotion of lasting peace and reconciliation in the Sudan as a whole, which could ease the suffering of the people of Darfur and promote the destabilization of the country and the region. Furthermore, the Peace and Security Council stressed the need for international justice to be pursued in a transparent and fair manner in order to avoid any perception of double standards, in conformity with the principles of international law, and expressed concern at the threat that such a development could pose to efforts aimed at promoting the rule of law and stability and at building strong national institutions in Africa.

Despite all the reasons that we put forward to justify our proposed amendments to the draft resolution, we did not receive the hoped-for response from certain Council members. In addition, because the resolution concerns a very important and sensitive issue — extending UNAMID's mandate within the required time frame — and because we were keen to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of the mission, we accepted the consensual language of the ninth preambular paragraph, which gives the Council the opportunity to further consider the issue of invoking article 16 of the Rome Statute of the ICC regarding the situation in Darfur. We hope that that will be done as soon as possible, because the main objective remains to ensure security and stability in the Sudan and the region, as well as peace and security for the Mission, in order to guarantee its success in Darfur.

We therefore voted in favour of the resolution. We believe that we did not sacrifice our substantive proposals in vain, because we garnered the support of 14 Council members, which was a victory for the entire Council. However, I wonder if, at the request of more than two thirds of the membership of the international community, the Security Council does not invoke article 16 of the Rome Statute, when will it do so?

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for its tireless efforts in the context of the negotiations on the resolution just adopted, which renews the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). I must tell Ambassador Sawers and the delegation of the United Kingdom that, on this occasion, we truly appreciated British patience.

Burkina Faso supported the resolution, convinced that UNAMID is the essential intermediary in the efforts to achieve peace and stability in Darfur. It was

with that in mind that we decided to deploy swiftly to Darfur a battalion of nearly 800 troops to make our contribution to the pacification of the Sudan. We express our satisfaction that the Council managed to retain its unity regarding the extension of UNAMID's mandate. We appeal to the troop contributors, the donors and the entire international community to lend all the necessary support to the Secretary-General so that he can attain the objective of deploying 80 per cent of UNAMID by 31 December 2008.

Burkina Faso voted in favour of the resolution notwithstanding the fact that not all of our concerns were taken into account, in particular those expressed by the African Union in the communiqué issued by the Peace and Security Council on 21 July 2008. As my delegation stressed during our last round of consultations, the United Nations has invested significant resources and made considerable efforts in the quest for a political solution to the Darfur crisis.

When we consider, in addition to UNAMID's expected deployment, the current involvement of the Sudanese authorities and the fact that the new Joint African Union-United Nations Chief Mediator is soon to take office, it seems clear to us that the international community has never been closer to a political resolution of the crisis. It is therefore desirable that the process be given every chance of success if we are to put an end to one of Africa's deadliest conflicts. That is why it is absolutely crucial that the Security Council return to the issue at a later date, in accordance with the ninth preambular paragraph of resolution 1828 (2008).

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): The United States welcomes and strongly supports the extension of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Today's decision demonstrates the Security Council's sustained support for the UNAMID peacekeeping operation and for its mission to protect the vulnerable civilians of Darfur.

The United States abstained in the voting because the language added to the resolution would send the wrong signal to Sudanese President Al-Bashir and undermine efforts to bring him and others to justice.

This Council cannot ignore the terrible crimes that have occurred throughout the conflict in Darfur and the massive human suffering that the world has witnessed. The Council addressed that tragic situation when it adopted resolution 1593 (2005), and the United States at that time noted the importance that we have attached and that we continue to attach to the Council's role in connection with investigations and prosecutions of the International Criminal Court (ICC). As is well known, the United States abstained in the voting on that resolution in the light of our concerns about the ICC, but, as we said when resolution 1593 (2005) was adopted,

> "We strongly support bringing to justice those responsible for the crimes and atrocities that have occurred in Darfur and ending the climate of impunity there. Violators of international humanitarian law and human rights law must be held accountable." (*S/PV.5158, p. 3*)

Having said that, I would like to make four points concerning our continued strong support for UNAMID.

First, the United States is increasingly concerned about the situation on the ground and will remain vigilant to the situation in Darfur. We are prepared to take additional measures as necessary to ensure that UNAMID deploys rapidly and completely and is empowered to fulfil its mandate.

Secondly, we deeply regret that, one year after the adoption of resolution 1769 (2007), UNAMID has barely begun to complete its vital mission. Deployment now stands at just over 9,000 troops and police officers — not even half of authorized levels. UNAMID's slow deployment is seriously interfering with its ability to protect itself and to fulfil its mandate in Darfur. The Security Council has sought to end the suffering of the people of Darfur, but we have fallen far short of our responsibility to protect them. We appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General, the troop contributors and the donors that are assisting them, but we must do better and we must do more. The lives of United Nations peacekeepers and of millions of innocent civilians depend on it. We urge all parties to redouble their efforts to ensure UNAMID's prompt, complete and effective deployment.

The United States is cooperating wholeheartedly in that endeavour through our work to train and equip peacekeepers to UNAMID's standards. We will continue to seek new avenues for providing concrete assistance to UNAMID's full and rapid deployment. We urge the United Nations to redouble its efforts to construct suitable infrastructure for rapid UNAMID expansion and to ship contingent-owned equipment to

Darfur as quickly as possible. We urge the United Nations to consider all options at its disposal to improve performance on those key points, the slow progress of which continues to hinder UNAMID deployment and operations.

Thirdly, we call on the Government of the Sudan to make every effort to facilitate UNAMID's deployment. We demand that the Government of the Sudan accept all troop contributions without reservations and in the order in which UNAMID commanders deem it feasible to deploy them. We demand that the Government of the Sudan comply fully with all Security Council resolutions, with the terms of the status-of-forces agreement and with all agreements pertaining to UNAMID. The Government of the Sudan must ensure UNAMID's free and secure movement in fulfilment of its mandate. All attacks on UNAMID personnel are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. We must hold the Government of the Sudan responsible for the safety and security of UNAMID and its personnel.

Fourthly, the United States will continue to keep a constant eye on the peace process and take all measures necessary to support it. We urge all of the parties to the conflict in Darfur to reach a lasting settlement. UNAMID must fulfil its mission in tandem with a viable peace process if there is to be an end to the terrible suffering in Darfur.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the adoption of resolution 1828 (2008) and warmly thanks the United Kingdom for its efforts to bring the negotiations to completion. France fully supports the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and hopes that its deployment will progress rapidly and unimpeded. We stress that the issue of support for UNAMID enjoys unanimity in the Council, which we welcome. The situation in Darfur, like that in the border areas of neighbouring countries affected by the crisis there, continues to merit the resolute involvement of the Council. We should spare no effort to ensure that UNAMID is able to complete its mission.

We take note of the request made, inter alia, by the African Union to defer the process initiated by the International Criminal Court. France, for its part, is deeply committed to the fight against impunity and to the work of the Court, which should follow its own course. We continue to appeal for the cooperation of the Sudanese authorities with the Court, including with respect to the outstanding arrest warrants against Mr. Harun and Mr. Kushayb. France also appeals to the Sudanese authorities and all parties to cease hostilities, facilitate the work of humanitarian workers, cooperate with UNAMID and resolutely commit themselves to a political process under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Let me first express my delegation's appreciation to the United Kingdom for preparing the resolution, taking the leading role in the negotiations and providing ample time for our deliberations. It is indeed very unfortunate that the resolution did not enjoy consensus.

My delegation fully supports the deployment and work of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), and therefore fully endorses the extension of its mandate. As a United Nations Member State and a police contributor to UNAMID, and in remembrance of the very regrettable tragedy visited upon UNAMID personnel recently, Indonesia welcomes the resolution's appropriate recognition of the issue of the safety and security of UNAMID personnel, including in relation to the urgent contribution to and prompt deployment of critical force enablers.

As stated in paragraph 9 of resolution 1828 (2008),

> "there can be no military solution to the conflict in Darfur, and ... an inclusive political settlement and the successful deployment of UNAMID are essential to re-establishing peace".

The resolution expresses the Council's insistence on a political solution and its readiness to take action against those impeding the peace process.

I wish also to reiterate Indonesia's position on the need to strike a balance between the promotion of justice and the pursuit of peace. In that regard, we fully support the views of the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference as expressed in their respective letters to the Council, as well as those of the Non-Aligned Movement on the need for the Security Council to assume its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and to ensure that the ongoing peace process in Darfur is not jeopardized.

My delegation therefore supports the call for the Council to consider requesting the ICC to defer the investigation in relation to the situation in Darfur, in line with article 16 of the Rome Statute. Indeed, resolution 1593 (2005), which referred the situation in Darfur to the Prosecutor of the ICC, envisaged, in its second preambular paragraph, the possible deferral of the case. The Rome Statute itself recognizes the role of political and security considerations in the pursuit of justice, as reflected in its article 16.

Now, the Security Council needs to find ways to respond to any possible obstruction of the peace process and of the maintenance of international peace and security. We are hopeful that the Council will consider positively the request made by those organizations, in particular the African Union, which is the partner of the United Nations in the political and peacekeeping endeavour in Darfur. The Security Council became involved in Darfur because of the urgent need of the people of Darfur to be protected. The persistence of the conflict would definitely not serve that purpose.

Finally, it is our wish that the resolution we have just adopted not only will support continuously the work of UNAMID but will also contribute to the promotion of the Peace Agreement and to the easing of the humanitarian situation in Darfur.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): We are pleased that today the Council has renewed the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which sends a clear message regarding the future deployment of the Mission, which is working in very difficult circumstances to promote the well-being of the population of Darfur. That is why Belgium voted in favour of resolution 1828 (2008).

The resolution firmly calls upon the Sudanese Government to cooperate fully with UNAMID and to fulfil its commitments. A year after our initial decision to deploy the mission, it is more than time for the Sudan to halt all obstruction of that deployment. The resolution also demands once again that all sides put an end to violence, and refers in particular to aerial bombing, which kills innocent civilians.

No less important are the provisions calling for unhindered humanitarian access and demands an end to violence against peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel. We also value the paragraphs of the resolution calling for a revival of the political process and calling on all parties to fully commit themselves to the process, in particular those rebels who have remained reluctant or have refused to commit themselves.

Another aspect of the text relates to fighting impunity and the need to bring to justice those responsible for crimes in Darfur. We would have preferred to see agreement on even firmer language in that regard. From the outset of this debate, Belgium has taken an unambiguous position of principle. The fight against impunity in Darfur is of the highest priority and should go hand in hand with the political process, so that a lasting settlement can be attained.

We strongly support the International Criminal Court and the pursuit of international justice. We look forward to the decision to be taken by the Pretrial Chamber in a matter of months regarding the Prosecutor's application for an indictment by the Court. We refute the arguments of those who are calling upon the Council to react in advance to developments that we cannot foresee at this stage, by invoking article 16 of the Rome Statute; some wished in fact to include that element in this resolution on UNAMID, where such a debate is entirely out of place. That is why resolution notes that some delegations may come back to the Council with regard to the process under way in the International Criminal Court.

It was the Security Council that, by resolution 1593 (2005), asked the International Criminal Court to take up the situation in Darfur. Given the systematic refusal of the Government of the Sudan to cooperate, we called again on that Government to cooperate with the Court, through the presidential statement of 16 June (S/PRST/2008/21). In particular, that Government must hand over to the Court the two persons for whom the Court has issued arrest warrants, Ahmed Haroun and Ali Kushayb, who continue openly to enjoy impunity in the Sudan.

The Sudan's obligations and responsibilities in Darfur are clear. They have been set out in all previous resolutions, as well as in this one. Belgium will continue to work in the Security Council to ensure respect by the Sudan for all Council resolutions. We owe it to the population of Darfur, but we also owe it to the cause of international justice.

Finally, I wish to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for its efforts leading to the adoption of resolution 1828 (2008).

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I too wish to commend the United Kingdom delegation for its endeavours during the negotiations leading to today's outcome.

Italy welcomes the adoption of resolution 1828 (2008), on the renewal of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). I wish to take this opportunity to express our strongest support for the force. In that connection, we also believe it to be absolutely essential that full deployment of UNAMID be accomplished and that the force become fully effective in fulfilling its tasks, especially considering the dire humanitarian situation and the terrible security conditions of the civilian population. At the same time, we reaffirm the crucial importance of the search for a political solution in Darfur, calling on all parties to engage fully and constructively in the peace process. To that end, we welcome the appointment of the joint African Union-United Nations Chief Mediator, Mr. Djibril Yipènè Bassolé.

Italy, as a founding member of the International Criminal Court (ICC), fully supports the inviolability of the independence of the Court and its role in promoting international justice and fighting impunity. Finally, Italy fully subscribes to the content of the 15 July declaration of the European Union presidency.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Viet Nam.

Viet Nam voted in favour of the draft resolution contained in document S/2008/506 in accordance with our policy supporting the full and expeditious deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and, hence, the renewal of UNAMID's mandate for another 12 months, until 31 July 2009.

We would like to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for having submitted the draft resolution on which we have just voted. We note with appreciation that our contributions have been reflected in the text of the resolution. Viet Nam holds that the Council must take a comprehensive approach to the Darfur conflict, which requires that attention be devoted equally to peace and justice; to the peace and political processes; to UNAMID's deployment and the safety of its staff, with a view to ensuring its effective operation; and to reconciliation in Darfur and in the Sudan at large.

We share the concerns of the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as those of many United Nations Member States and Council members, about the possible negative impact of a potential indictment requested by the International Criminal Court Prosecutor against the President of the Sudan on the peace process in that country and on the very operation of UNAMID. We take note of the fact that those concerns are reflected in the ninth preambular paragraph of the resolution.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today, Sir, was the last day of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), and it is the last day of your presidency of the Security Council for the month of July. I wish on this occasion to extend to you my gratitude, Mr. President, for the wise and excellent manner in which you have guided the work of the Security Council throughout this extremely busy month, during which we have witnessed many developments. It is a manner, Sir, that reflects your diplomatic wisdom and high professionalism, as well as the greatness of your country and its historical contributions, which inspire all our peoples.

I would also like to extend my thanks and gratitude for the valuable efforts undertaken by Ambassador Sawers, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which sponsored the resolution. We commend the delegation of the United Kingdom for its strenuous efforts in that respect.

My country is very gratified that the Security Council has adopted the special resolution on the renewal of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The Mission's mandate, as defined in resolution 1769 (2007), opened the way towards cooperation and partnership among the Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations. Since our adoption of that

resolution on this day last year, many positive developments have occurred with respect to the hybrid operation, which we hope will attain 80 per cent deployment by the end of this year, as indicated by the Secretary-General.

I would like to emphasize before this Council that the Sudan continues to be fully committed to its pledges concerning the hybrid operation and will continue to be so. The Security Council should provide similar cooperation; give highest priority to the peace process; and allay all threats to the process, such as the measure undertaken by the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC); take decisive measures against the rebel movements that are trying to impede the peace process, to the point that some have even invaded our capital, Khartoum; and stop sending conflicting messages to those rebel groups.

The resolution that has been adopted today clearly emphasizes the fact that we should support the Chief Mediator, Mr. Djibril Bassolé. The Council should also match those words with deeds, and the efforts of Mr. Bassolé should be supported in a manner that would allow us to maintain lasting peace in Darfur and to bolster our country's national efforts to promote the peace process; as clearly demonstrated by the historic visit of the President of the Republic of the Sudan to the three Darfur provinces over the past few days.

In emphasizing our interest in supporting the paths of peace, the maintenance of peace and humanitarian assistance, and the rehabilitation of Darfur, we offer our respect and gratitude for the great and historic role undertaken by the African Union. The African Union is a principal partner, even before the United Nations, in the maintenance of peace in Darfur and in the ongoing peace process there. The African Union is not a foreign element; in fact, it is an inherent partner in all matters related to Darfur.

In commending the role of the African Union, the principal partner in all issues concerning peace and stability of Darfur, we also commend the very important adoption by the African Union, at the emergency ministerial meeting of its Peace and Security Council at Addis Ababa, of a resolution that seeks to rise above the impediments and complexities created by the unfortunate and tragic action taken by the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC against one of the greatest leaders of the African continent, who has put an end to the longest-running conflict there and brought about peace between the South and the North of the Sudan.

At a time when the use of double standards is rife used and real crimes are being covered up in many parts of the world, Africa, which is burdened by its own problems, hopes that its efforts and initiatives will be respected by this Organization, as its principal partner. We should move beyond the measure taken by the Chief Prosecutor, which is a recipe for destruction and ruin and poses a catastrophic danger to the stability, security and unity of the Sudan, the region as a whole and even the entire African continent.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once more our appreciation to you, Sir, and to the members of the Council for your wonderful efforts. I reiterate our welcome to the renewal of the mandate of the UNAMID. We also wish to stress that no one is more impacted by and concerned with the problems of Darfur than the Government and the people of the Sudan. We are pleased to see the international community's respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Sudan bolstered by the tangible measure of the resolution adopted by this Council.

The President: I thank Ambassador Mohamad for his kind words to the presidency.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

As this is the last Council meeting under the presidency of Viet Nam, I wish to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all my colleagues in the Council who have extended their most valuable cooperation to my delegation. I also wish to thank the Security Council secretariat team for its continued support throughout the month and to all of the other Secretariat staff members who have worked behind the scenes in supporting the work of the presidency.

The meeting rose at 10.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5948

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5948th meeting

Monday, 4 August 2008, 11.25 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Grauls	(Belgium)
Members:	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Li Kexin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Sixth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (S/2008/281)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-44826 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.25 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President (*spoke in French*): As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of August 2008, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Le Luong Minh, Permanent Representative of Viet Nam, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of July 2008. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Minh for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Sixth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (S/2008/281)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Sierra Leone, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Pemagbi (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/512, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations. Members also have before them document S/2008/281, which contains the sixth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall now put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Indonesia, Italy, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Panama, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

The President (*spoke in French*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1829 (2008).

I now give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Pemagbi (Sierra Leone): The delegation of the Republic of Sierra Leone wishes to express its profound appreciation to the Security Council for the resolution that has just been adopted. We warmly welcome the resolution, mainly because it marks another significant phase in the United Nations experiment in post-conflict peacebuilding, with Sierra Leone as the laboratory. In particular, the transformation of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) into an integrated peacebuilding outfit, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), on the basis of the achievement of carefully measured benchmarks is a reassuring indication of the country's progress in consolidating peace and stability.

Since the armed conflict ended in 2002, Sierra Leone has conducted two democratic presidential, parliamentary and local council elections, and has made considerable efforts to revive the economy, to recover from the ravages of the war and to relaunch the country on the path of development. We have not done those things alone. We thank the United Nations and our other international community partners, as well as our bilateral supporters, for their investment in the efforts to achieve lasting peace, to pursue the ideals of

democracy and human rights and to lift Sierra Leone from the bottom of the human development index.

We have made gains, but we are far from having crossed the bridge. As an example, we need sustained support to achieve the goals set in the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, namely, those related to developing the energy, justice and security sectors, youth employment and integration, governance and capacity-building in the public service. It is no overstatement to suggest that a gap will appear in the success story of the United Nations in Sierra Leone if the goals in those priority areas, set by Sierra Leone and the Peacebuilding Commission, are not fully accomplished. I assure members that the Government and the people of Sierra Leone remain firmly committed to fulfilling their own part of the agreement.

Finally, for Sierra Leone and many countries in a similar situation and with similar experiences, the current food and oil crises pose potential risks to peace and security that the Council can ill afford to ignore. Already, the crises have stretched our fragile economy nearly to the limits of its elasticity. We need more help.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.5949

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5949th meeting

Wednesday, 6 August 2008, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Grauls	(Belgium)
Members:	Burkina Faso	Mr. Tiendrébéogo
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1770 (2007) (S/2008/495)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-45136 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1770 (2007) (S/2008/495)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iraq, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al-Bayati (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/495, which contains the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1770 (2007). I wish to draw the attention of members to document S/2008/523, which contains the text of a note verbale dated 4 August 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Iraq transmitting a letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and by His Excellency Mr. Alejandro Wolff, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States, on behalf of the Multinational Force.

I now give the floor to Mr. Pascoe.

Mr. Pascoe: Mr. President, I thank you for this opportunity to brief the Council on developments in Iraq and the work of the United Nations in the country. Our efforts have increased in important ways during the year since the adoption of resolution 1770 (2007) in August 2007. Members of the Council have before them the fourth quarterly report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of that resolution, focusing on the activities in the latest period of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

From the moment he visited Iraq early in his term of office, the Secretary-General has made clear his strong commitment to seeing the United Nations do more to help the Government and the people of that country. That has not been an easy task given the circumstances in Iraq, but today, under the more the robust mandate of resolution 1770 (2007) and the strong leadership of his Special Representative on the ground, the United Nations is steadily expanding its presence and activities in Iraq, while remaining mindful of the very complex operating environment in the country.

During the past year, we have witnessed steady changes in Iraq that should be noted. As the Secretary-General's report underscores, political and military efforts have contributed to improved security in most parts of the country, most visibly during the past three months. Violent incidents and casualties have declined and we have witnessed the improved performance of Iraq's security forces during a series of operations. However, civilian casualties as a result of violence remain unacceptably high. A string of suicide bombings just last week killed 60 people and injured hundreds more in Baghdad and Kirkuk, a brutal reminder of the lengths to which some are willing to go to provoke hatred and division among the Iraqi people.

As the Secretary-General's report also makes clear, it is necessary to cement the gains on the security front through strengthened and sustained political dialogue. While a window for improved political dialogue may exist, the situation does remain tenuous and progress achieved thus far could be lost. There has, however, been some progress. The leading Sunni bloc,

Tawafuq, recently returned to the Government, and Prime Minister Al-Maliki filled the vacant cabinet posts that were empty since the boycotts of last spring and summer. The proper implementation of the Amnesty Law, which went into effect in February of this year, has the potential to contribute to developing trust between communities in the country. While the political atmosphere in Baghdad, Kirkuk and elsewhere deteriorated somewhat during the recent debate on the election law, we are hopeful that the Iraqi parties are coming to recognize the need to continue and to expand the extent of their political dialogue.

Since the Council handed down a new mandate for UNAMI one year ago, the Mission has worked with great energy to ensure its implementation. UNAMI continues to focus on advancing political dialogue, national reconciliation and the resolution of disputed internal boundaries, as well as on preparations for the provincial elections in order to ensure they are seen as credible and broadly accepted by the Iraqi people.

Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission, with assistance from UNAMI, has reached a number of operational milestones. Those include organizing the field structure needed to conduct the voter registration update, which is successfully under way in all of Iraq's governorates. The Electoral Commission, with UNAMI's support, recruited and trained nearly 8,000 staff to administer voter registration services to 564 centres nationwide. Almost all centres have been open throughout the voter registration period, which is a notable feat considering the immense operational and security challenges inside Iraq. UNAMI has also advised the Electoral Commission on how to ensure transparency and strong oversight in the voter registration update process. The international electoral team, in its visits to voter registration centres and field election offices throughout the country, continues to be impressed by the knowledge and professionalism of election administration staff. The Electoral Commission has thus far accredited close to 20,000 political party agents and observers to monitor election events.

Without new electoral legislation, however, those critical governorate elections cannot go forward. As we meet here this morning, discussions in the Iraqi Parliament in Baghdad around the adoption of a new law remain unresolved. The United Nations has been doing all it can to urge the reaching of practical compromises. In that regard, I would include the fact that we have been involved in all of the discussions that have been ongoing in recent days on the issue, offering many variations to the parties to try to help them to reach a compromise. A failure to come to agreement on a law at this time would be a major setback, not only for the prospects for elections this year, but for the larger process of national reconciliation in Iraq.

In connection with discord over the passage of the election law, the situation in Kirkuk grew more tense and turned violent last week. The bloodshed in Kirkuk illustrated just how fragile the situation has become and how the lack of dialogue and compromise could easily lead to renewed violence. The passage of the draft election law that was subsequently vetoed and the Kirkuk Provincial Council decision to set in motion mechanisms for a referendum on the status of Kirkuk were provocations by both sides that were inevitably going to raise tensions.

UNAMI continues its work on the issue of Kirkuk and disputed internal boundaries, and hopes to establish the firm recognition among Iraqi parties that sustainable peace can be based only upon collective solutions acceptable to all concerned. The Mission plans to present its next set of analyses on disputed territories to the Presidency Council, the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan regional Government during the fall. While UNAMI is working as an honest broker to establish a mutually acceptable way to handle those complex issues, we have repeatedly stressed that the ultimate responsibility to make the difficult decisions lies first and foremost with the Government of Iraq and the other representatives of the Iraqi people.

In addition to addressing disputed internal boundaries and the adoption of an inclusive electoral law, there is a need for progress on the fundamental issues that define the nature of the Iraqi State. Those include defining the nature of the federal framework in Iraq, establishing a clear revenue-sharing mechanism and equitably managing Iraq's considerable resources. The United Nations continues to assist the Constitutional Review Committee in the expeditious conclusion of its work, and important related legislation continues to be discussed. Tackling those core issues is as vital as it is difficult and will require wisdom, patience and compromise by all sides.

Iraq's neighbours and other States in the region have a vested interest in Iraq's stability and can and should play a constructive role in that regard. During the past year, numerous positive steps were taken to strengthen regional cooperation in support of Iraq. Following the Stockholm conference to review annual progress in the implementation of the International Compact with Iraq and, in the wake of the security operations conducted with the leadership of Prime Minister Al-Maliki, several member States in the region announced the restoration of full diplomatic representation in Baghdad. Additionally, two meetings of the expanded Conference of Iraq's Neighbours took place at the ministerial level: in Turkey in November 2007 and in Kuwait in April 2008. The Secretary-General and the Iraqi Prime Minister also hosted a high-level meeting on Iraq here in New York last September. The second round of working group meetings on border security, refugees and energy were also held and UNAMI is currently assisting Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in preparation for the next cycle of working group meetings, leading up to a ministerial conference in Baghdad later this year. The Mission is helping to build the capacity of the dedicated unit within the Ministry, which has been playing a pivotal role in preparing those events.

We strongly welcome the developments on the regional front and hope that other regional States will seize on opportunities for turning the regional dialogue process into a real partnership based on mutual interests and concrete cooperation in diplomatic, political, economic and cultural areas. Both Iraq and regional actors must do more, and the United Nations is ready to assist in that effort.

Supporting Iraq's reconstruction and development remains a top priority for the United Nations. While the economy continues to grow due in large part to high oil prices, that has not yet translated into improvements in the lives of ordinary citizens. Unemployment rates remain stubbornly high and the same governorates rate consistently low on key socio-economic indicators such as unemployment, malnutrition and illiteracy. It is estimated that 60 per cent of Iraqis do not have access to one or more essential social services and that 15 per cent lack food security. However, security improvements present a new opportunity for Iraq's oil wealth to reach its population and improve their lives.

In addition to United Nations assistance for the purpose of meeting those needs, we are working with the Government of Iraq on economic reform for private sector development, aimed particularly at increasing employment opportunities and at diversifying the nation's economic output, which is now heavily reliant upon oil. A new $30-million project will be dedicated to assist in the development of a viable and functioning private sector in Iraq.

Economic initiatives were also central to the agenda of the first annual review of the International Compact with Iraq, which was held in Stockholm, Sweden, on 29 May 2008. One hundred States and organizations were in attendance. The Government of Iraq presented its initiatives for full integration with the regional and global economies, including the establishment of an investment commission, private sector partnerships and transregional initiatives to promote investment, trade and greater cooperation with neighbouring States. The Conference welcomed the Government of Iraq's proposal for a partnership for development, which recognizes that Iraq is a wealthy country that requires technical assistance more than aid. As a result, in close cooperation with the Government of Iraq and donors, we are transitioning from high-capital projects to co-financing, capacity-building and technical assistance.

The Iraq Trust Fund — to which the European Commission and Japan, among other donors, have been particularly generous contributors — has already disbursed $1 billion. The $300 million that remain are actively being programmed. The Trust Fund goals are now fully aligned with the Compact. With the consent of the Government of Iraq and its donors, it is envisioned that the Iraq Trust Fund will complete activities at the same time as the Compact, in 2011. United Nations assistance will continue supporting the Government of Iraq as it leads its own recovery.

Increased attention has been placed on the humanitarian needs of Iraqis and on alleviating the suffering of Iraqi refugees, internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups. Over 2.8 million people are currently displaced inside Iraq, and they, together with refugees from neighbouring countries, are returning to their places of origin at a steady rate of up to 10,000 people per month.

The percentage of United Nations projects dedicated to humanitarian activities has increased,

supported by funding received through the 2008 Iraq consolidated appeal, which currently stands at 47 per cent funded, or $128 million. A regional appeal is being prepared for 2009 that will aim to incorporate into one framework the funding needs not only inside Iraq, but also of Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries. In consultation with the donors, $20 million of the $55 million that the Trust Fund has gained through interest have been dedicated to addressing humanitarian needs, including through the development of an emergency response fund, which will provide a rapid response capacity to handle the effects of the major military operations that have transpired during the reporting period.

In the military operations undertaken in Basra and Sadr City, United Nations agencies provided emergency water, medicines and food parcels to affected communities and maintained constant dialogue with military commanders, briefing them on the humanitarian situation and its possible deterioration. However, humanitarian access during military operations is often constrained and humanitarian actors at times have felt it unsafe to deliver urgent relief. All parties to conflict should do their utmost to normalize and facilitate humanitarian access during these critical times.

During the reporting period, the UNAMI Human Rights Office also focused its monitoring and advocacy activities on the plight of Iraqi civilians who reside in the areas where intense fighting has taken place in recent months. Although much has been accomplished in promoting the protection of human rights and the rule of law in Iraq, a great deal more remains to be done. Journalists, educators, medical doctors, judges and lawyers remained prime targets for armed militia and criminal gangs. Gender-based violence, murders, suicides and so-called honour crimes also continued to be documented. UNAMI continues to seek better access to detention centres and improved mechanisms for the efficient legal processing of detainees. Beyond its monitoring and advocacy actions, UNAMI continues to run an active programme of human rights capacity-building and training for Government officials and civil society groups. The Mission also actively supports the work of the Ministry of Human Rights and devotes significant attention to legislative activity relating to human rights and the rule of law.

Under the leadership of Special Representative De Mistura, UNAMI, along with the United Nations country team, is working hard to build an enhanced presence throughout the country, despite the obvious challenges and continuous security threats to operations in Iraq. The Baghdad and Erbil offices are expanding, a presence has been established in Basra and Kirkuk, and planning is under way to post national and international staff in Mosul, Najaf and Ramadi. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organization have moved their most senior staff from Amman to Baghdad, and the overall ceiling for United Nations staff members in Iraq has been raised further to accommodate those trends. UNAMI's Iraqi Government liaison officers are currently operating in the offices of nine governors throughout Iraq. Their presence has been instrumental in expanding the breadth and depth of United Nations contact beyond the nation's capital.

Security remains essential for the United Nations to function in Iraq, and support and protection from Member States is vital. I would like to express appreciation to the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I), the Department of Safety and Security and others for the support they have already provided. In view of the possible changes in the current arrangement for the presence of the MNF-I after 31 December 2008, it is essential that the security of the United Nations presence continue to be ensured.

The so-called distinct entity established in 2004 under the unified command of the multinational forces with a dedicated mission to provide security for the United Nations presence in Iraq recently received contributions that will ensure its operation well into 2009. I would therefore like to thank the Governments of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Italy and Germany for their recent generous contributions to the Trust Fund to Support the Distinct Entity Created to Provide Security for the United Nations Presence in Iraq. We encourage Member States to consider further contributions to the Trust Fund and to provide additional military advisers to the Mission in Iraq, as they remain a critical component of expanding our presence inside the country. We are further grateful to Georgia, Fiji, the Republic of Korea and South Africa for providing security and operational support.

Construction of a new integrated compound in Baghdad is essential to the presence of the United Nations in Iraq. I would therefore like to thank the Government of Iraq for its provision of a site for the

new integrated United Nations compound in Baghdad and urge it to finalize the arrangement for the co-funding of that important project.

I would also acknowledge the leadership that Special Representative De Mistura has displayed in that very difficult operating environment. He and his team of national and international staff have done extraordinary work for Iraq and its people.

As I said at the outset, Iraqis have witnessed an improvement in security. However, as I said before, the situation remains fragile and recent gains could easily be lost. It is imperative that we not become complacent due to recent achievements. Efforts must now focus on achieving the political gains necessary to build trust and confidence across community lines and to improve the quality of life for all Iraqis, including the delivery of basic services and the generation of employment. The United Nations continues to believe that trust is best established by tackling the issues at the heart of each community's competing vision for the future of Iraq. That includes the federal framework of the country, the handling of Kirkuk and other disputed territories, the distribution of wealth from hydrocarbons and a viable revenue-sharing agreement. The potential is there, and it is ultimately up to the Iraqi people to make sound choices that will allow them to build a sustainable and lasting peace. I can assure the Council that we in the United Nations are making a strong contribution and will continue to try to help Iraq in that process.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): I am pleased to report to the Security Council on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I). I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing on the important work undertaken by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and extend our appreciation through him to all our United Nations colleagues on the ground in Iraq for their ongoing dedication and hard work.

Today, on behalf of MNF-I, I would like to discuss seven points on the progress achieved thus far.

First, allow me to address the sustained decrease in security incidents and violence. For the past three months, total security incidents have remained at their lowest level in over four years. In just the past year, since June 2007, the overall number of attacks has decreased by 84 per cent; civilian deaths due to violence have decreased by 65 per cent; Iraqi Security Forces deaths have decreased by 67 per cent; United States military deaths have decreased by 91 per cent; coalition military deaths have decreased by 96 per cent; explosions due to improvised explosive devices have decreased by 75 per cent; suicide explosions have decreased by 65 per cent; and ethno-sectarian deaths have decreased by 94 per cent.

Coalition forces and Iraqi Security Forces have achieved those security gains even as MNF-I has drawn down forces from surge levels. The United States has withdrawn, without replacement, the last of its five surge brigade combat teams, as well as its Marine expeditionary unit and two Marine battalions. Also, the Australian battle group has departed from Iraq and the Polish contingent will soon be withdrawn.

Ongoing security operations in Basra, Sadr City, Mosul, Amarah and Diyala have produced encouraging results, further degrading the capabilities of Al-Qaida in Iraq and reducing the influence of illegal militias in strategic Iraqi cities. Nonetheless, Al-Qaida in Iraq remains a serious threat, particularly in the North. It retains the intent and the capability of carrying out sensational, lethal attacks, and its use of person-borne improvised explosive devices and female suicide bombers remains a particular challenge.

We also remain concerned by the flow of foreign fighters and lethal aid into Iraq. Syria is the primary gateway for foreign terrorists moving into Iraq, and the Government of Syria must do more to halt the operation of foreign fighter networks within its territory.

During the recent operations in Basra, Sadr City and Maysan, Iraqi troops uncovered convincing evidence that Iranian lethal aid has continued to flow into Iraq. In addition, during those operations, numerous Mahdi Army militia fighters and leaders from the Mahdi Army's associated, highly trained special groups fled to Iran, where they received sanctuary. The lethal activities of Iran's Islamic Republican Guard corps, the Qods Force, contradict Iran's publicly stated policy of supporting the Iraqi Government and must cease.

Secondly, I would like describe the continuing increase in the capability of the Iraqi Security Forces, which has contributed substantially to the

improvements in the overall security environment. More than 580,000 personnel now serve in the Iraqi Security Forces, which represents an increase of over 21,000 personnel since our last report to the Council in June.

There are now 161 Iraqi army combat battalions conducting operations, which represents an increase of 14 battalions since our last report. Over 70 per cent or 113 of those Iraqi army combat battalions are assessed to be in the lead for operations. Of those, 93 are rated as able not only to take the lead in operations, but also to fully plan, execute and sustain operations with minimal or no assistance from coalition forces beyond enablers and adviser teams. Another 10 battalions are currently in force generation, and MNF-I plans an additional 10 for force generation in 2008.

The Iraqi air force and navy have made substantial progress as well. The Iraqi navy is now conducting an average of 42 independent patrols per week in Iraqi territorial waters, a 20 per cent increase in the past two months. In addition, the Iraqi navy also maintains security responsibility for the port of Umm Qasr. The Iraqi air force is providing support to counterinsurgency operations through intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance patrols of Iraqi borders and critical electric and oil infrastructure. Those efforts have resulted in the capture of insurgents and the identification of damaged infrastructure, allowing the Government of Iraq to expedite repairs and re-establish essential services. Furthermore, the Iraqi air force has proven itself very capable during combat operations in Basra, Sadr City, Mosul, Amarah and Diyala by successfully conducting transport missions, reconnaissance and casualty evacuation.

The national police also continue to increase their effectiveness and they are continuing their efforts to achieve a better ethno-sectarian balance within the force, through both recruiting and assignments, so that force demographics better reflect the Iraqi population. As of the end of July, 36 Iraqi national police battalions were conducting operations alongside a battalion-sized Iraqi emergency response unit. The national police forces have conducted more than 15 operational deployments outside of Baghdad, most recently in Basra, Mosul and Baqubah. That increased effectiveness and deployability marks the beginning of a transition from a static force centred on Baghdad to a rapid response force for the Government of Iraq.

Thirdly, I would like to provide an update on the role of the coalition. The support of the 30 countries contributing to the coalition, NATO's training mission and the operations of UNAMI is critical to the success of Iraqi efforts to build a stable and secure country. Coalition members other than the United States contribute over 9,000 forces to the Multinational Force and another 450 personnel to UNAMI. Every contributor, large and small, plays a critical role — from the Azeris, who have provided security at the Haditha Dam since 2003, to the Romanians, who provide route security in the Dhi Qar and Muthanna provinces. We also welcome the assistance of countries that continue to provide security for the United Nations personnel and have contributed to the United Nations trust fund. We remain committed to ensuring that the United Nations receives the guarantees necessary for it to sustain and expand its robust presence in Iraq.

Fourthly, I would like to emphasize that MNF-I is continuing progressively to transfer responsibility for security to the Government of Iraq. Ten out of 18 provinces are now under provincial Iraqi control, with Qadisiyah province having transitioned on 16 July. Other provinces are expected to transition by the end of this year.

In June, the Iraqi Government continued its offensive against illegal armed groups and the special groups, through Operation Promise of Peace in Missan, which focused on securing the provincial capital, Amarah, as well as the border and some smaller cities. Several senior provincial officials were arrested, and Iraqi security forces seized numerous caches of weapons of Iranian origin. Such operations show the willingness of Prime Minister al-Maliki and the Iraqi Government to confront militants, regardless of their sect or ethnicity, and to secure the country against the threat of malign Iranian influence.

Iraqi security forces, working alongside local groups, have also conducted operations in Mosul against Al-Qaida elements. Operations Mother of Two Springs and Lion's Roar denied Al-Qaida sanctuary in the urban areas of Ninawa province and captured and killed several leaders of Al-Qaida in Iraq.

Recently, Iraqi security forces and coalition units have launched a major clearing operation in Diyala province, north-east of Baghdad, to clear the remaining safe havens of Al-Qaida in Iraq and stop the Jaish al-Mahdi from smuggling and supplying lethal aid.

Iraqi security forces have significantly extended their control, not only through the execution of military operations, but also through the facilitation of humanitarian assistance and the restoration of basic services. Following the military operations in Missan province, the Government of Iraq is beginning to implement a $102-million programme to refurbish and rebuild schools, develop municipalities, improve electricity and health services, build up the police forces and provide clean water and unemployment assistance. That initiative follows similar reconstruction efforts to reduce the appeal of militant groups in Basra, Sadr City, Mosul and Amarah.

The fifth point I would like to discuss is political reconciliation. The willingness of the Government of Iraq to confront militias, regardless of sect, has encouraged the Sunni coalition Tawafuq to reconcile its internal differences and return its ministers to the Government, thereby providing an additional avenue for Sunni participation in the political process.

In late July, six ministers representing the Sunni coalition were approved for the cabinet and four new Shia ministers have filled vacant Sadrist seats. UNAMI remains deeply engaged in assisting the Government of Iraq in various political and diplomatic activities, including addressing internal border issues, promoting regional dialogue and assisting internally displaced persons and refugees, as we just heard. Recently, UNAMI has been instrumental in advising the Council of Representatives committee members in the preparation of the provincial elections law and the Iraq High Elections Committee as they prepared for and started voter registration on 15 July. We are encouraged by UNAMI's plans to expand its footprint in Iraq and believe that the assistance of the United Nations will be critical to Iraq's long-term development and stability. The proposed United Nations compound in Baghdad will ensure that UNAMI is able to continue its important role in Iraq, and we look forward to Iraqi support to ensure those facilities are constructed.

Sixthly, I would like to stress the importance of Iraq's neighbours in supporting Iraq's efforts to provide security, achieve political progress and build its economy. The Government of Iraq's security successes have fostered international confidence. Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have all named ambassadors to Iraq, and other neighbours, including Turkey, have recently sent high-level delegations to Baghdad. We hope that others in the region will follow their example.

Finally, I want to highlight that negotiations continue between the United States and the Iraqi Government on our transition relationship, including with respect to security, which will recognize the increasing ability of the Iraqi Security Forces to assume greater responsibility for security and stability.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/495), which is before the Security Council today, highlights the sustainable progress that has been achieved by the Iraqi Government, with the assistance of the United Nations and the support of the MNF-I and the Iraqi Security Forces. The international community supports a free, democratic, pluralistic, federal and unified Iraq, and I call upon all parties to renew their commitment to assist the Government of Iraq in continuing the hard work to overcome the many challenges that remain.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Bayati (Iraq): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to present our thanks to your predecessor, His Excellency the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam, for his distinguished efforts during his presidency in the month of July.

I would like to thank His Excellency Ambassador Alejandro Wolff for the briefing he presented to the Council on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I) and for the efforts to support security and stability in Iraq during the previous months. Our thanks also go to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his statement, and our appreciation goes to Mr. Staffan de Mistura and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) team in Iraq and New York for their tireless work to help the Government and the people of Iraq.

My delegation has taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of UNAMI contained in document S/2008/495 and would like to present the following comments. On the political and security level,the Iraqi Government has succeeded in preventing a sectarian war in the country and has proven that it is not a sectarian Government, but that it is one that represents all Iraqis without discrimination,

except on the basis of their ability to serve Iraq and defend its national interests.

During the past few months, Iraq has witnessed a series of military operations, led by the Iraqi army and carried out with the support of the multinational forces, in Basrah, Baghdad, Meesan, Mosul and Diyala. The operations have targeted members of Al-Qaida and other armed militia groups as well as other outlaws, and they have led to the success of the law enforcement plan, the enforcement of Government control and an 80 per cent decrease in the number of terrorist operations and violent acts.

The Iraqi Government has also succeeded in building its armed forces on a national, professional and neutral basis, which has led to their determination and will to confront Al-Qaida and other militias and to strike against those groups. It is now clear that the loyalty of the Iraqi troops is only to Iraq, not to particular rulers, parties or sects. The Iraqi Government is keen to stress human rights principles regarding the conduct of the Iraqi armed forces and to prevent those forces from having political affiliations.

The number of army, police and other security forces has increased in all provinces in accordance with their security needs. The Iraqi Government has assumed responsibility for security from the multinational forces in 10 Iraqi provinces — most recently, al-Diwaniya province, in July 2008. That is another step towards the assumption of full security responsibility for the remaining Iraqi provinces from the multinational forces and towards the achievement of complete control over security by the end of 2008.

The decline in violence in Iraq has led to a return to normal life in all parts of the country and has encouraged a number of internally displaced families and Iraqi refugees to return to their homes. The Iraqi Government, along with the Iraqi Council of Representatives and in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other international organizations, is conducting a national strategy to encourage the voluntary return of those families. The Cabinet has allocated more than $195 million for the repatriation of internally and externally displaced persons, and the Government has allocated $140 million to help Iraqi refugees. That strategy also includes the evacuation of homes abandoned by their owners because of violence, the granting of financial incentives and the immediate and unconditional return of those who left their jobs. It is to be noted that 271 Iraqi families returned from Iran and 31 individuals returned from Refha camp, in Saudi Arabia, in May 2008. In addition, many Iraqi refugees have returned from Syria and Jordan in coordination with international organizations. Iraq has also provided support for countries hosting Iraqis.

The Iraqi Council of Representatives has adopted a provincial elections law to ensure the holding of free and fair elections in all Iraqi provinces, counties and villages. That legislation has been adopted to ensure the inclusion of all segments of Iraqi society and to ensure the holding of democratic elections without any external interference. We have just received information from Baghdad that a committee comprising Iraqi parliamentarians has been formed to discuss proposals regarding the provincial elections in Kirkuk and to bridge gaps in that regard.

The Iraqi Government is keen to proceed with the process of national reconciliation to maintain the unity of the Iraqi people, make progress in the national dialogue policy and expand participation in the political process in accordance with the Iraqi Constitution, in order to build a free, multilateral, federal and democratic Iraq. Although the political process faces some challenges, it is witnessing progress towards a democratic transition, positive political developments and coexistence among all segments of society. Within the context of the continuing national reconciliation efforts, the Iraqi Government is seeking to convene an expanded religious conference bringing together religious clerics from various religions, sects and nationalities, as a step to build solidarity among all Iraqis and facilitate the return of displaced persons to their homes. Moreover, the Iraqi Government is currently implementing a campaign to renovate houses of worship, including mosques and churches.

The adoption of a general amnesty law has had a positive role in enhancing the national reconciliation efforts. Under that law, the Ministry of Justice has released 1,648 detainees; the Ministry of Interior has released 2,560, including 59 Arab nationalists; the Ministry of Defence has released 545; and the Ministry of Labour has released 314. These are in addition to the detainees released by the Multinational Forces.

Political efforts have resulted in the return of the ministers belonging to the Tawafuq bloc to the

Government of National Unity, and the Council of Representatives has voted to appoint 10 ministers to fill ministerial posts vacated when the members of a number of political blocs withdrew from the Government in 2007.

At the socio-economic level, the improvement in the security situation has had positive effects on the economic situation in Iraq. The reports of the National Committee on Investment have indicated that the volume of investment in Iraq has reached $7.4 billion, which has been distributed among various basic facilities in the country. This has involved, inter alia, the building of factories, housing units, hospitals, pharmaceutical plants and refineries and the development of airports and ports with the involvement of Iraqi and foreign investors. Najaf International Airport was inaugurated on 20 July 2008. A large number of businessmen, investors and investment companies have already visited Iraq, and a number of investment agreements have been signed with many countries.

The Iraqi Government's top priorities have been to improve economic conditions and revive trade in order to move the country away from the brink of economic and social collapse. The Iraqi Government was able to reduce the inflation rate from 65 per cent in 2006 to 22 per cent in 2007, and it is expected that the unemployment rate will have been reduced to 17 per cent by the end of 2008, as compared with 28 per cent in 2003.

In April 2008, the Iraqi Council of Representatives adopted a law on civil servants and public sector salaries, as well as a university service law, in a step aimed at supporting higher education and scientific research institutes. That was part of an effort to support the public service sector, to prevent a brain drain and to take measures to encourage the return of qualified professionals to Iraq.

A social protection network has been established to provide care for members of certain social segments, such as orphans, widows and the unemployed, and $812 million has been allocated for that project. The share of the State's general budget for the education sector has been increased, from 3 per cent in 2007 to 5 per cent in 2008, and 700 new schools have been built, with another 4,000 to be built by the end of this year.

The process of health sector reform has been launched in order to provide primary health care and ensure the equitable provision of health services to all people. Approximately 300 health centres have been built, and approximately 37 general hospitals have been rehabilitated and expanded. In addition, a number of specialized hospitals and health centres are to be built in collaboration with a number of international companies. The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with UNAMI and the World Health Organization, has made significant achievements, such as decreases in the infant, maternal and under-5 mortality rates and progress in controlling cholera.

The Iraqi Government has launched a strategy to develop the agricultural sector, to achieve food security, to increase investment in agriculture and build capacity in that sector, to improve the quality of production, to protect the environment, to combat desertification and to provide modern machinery.

In relation to oil wealth, the Iraqi Government has made plans to increase production to 3.5 million barrels per day, with the continuous development of that sector through the adoption of legislation and an investment framework and the fair distribution of oil revenue. The Iraqi Government is keen to utilize its revenues for the benefit of the Iraqi people in the budget of 2008 through a financial policy leading to lowered inflation and the adoption of the largest budget in Iraq's history. It is worth mentioning that the Iraqi House of Representatives adopted a law on combating the smuggling of oil and petroleum products and considers oil smuggling to be an economic crime that threatens the security and economy of the country.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister stressed that Iraq is moving towards the implementation of reconstruction and investment projects that cannot be implemented until all forms of corruption are eliminated. Therefore, the Iraqi Government launched a national initiative to fight financial and administrative corruption, which is one of the most dangerous burdens that Iraq inherited from the former dictatorial regime.

Following the ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, a conference was held in Baghdad at which the Baghdad declaration on fighting corruption was adopted. The Iraqi Government committed itself and has pledged to fight corruption in all its forms and to promote the principles of

accountability and integrity. The conference also resulted in the establishment of a national council to fight corruption.

With regard to women's rights and the importance of their participation in the political process, the Iraqi Government has stressed that Iraqi women shall exercise their rights, contribute to the political process and effectively participate in the upcoming provincial council elections, in which the percentage of women candidates will be 25 per cent, the same as in the Iraqi Parliament. Moreover, Iraq has ratified a convention on the establishment of an Arab women's organization in the context of its aim to strengthen the role of women in Iraqi society. The Prime Minister has launched a project to form an institution to address the issues and problems of widows, divorcees and elderly women. The Government has allocated $200 million to that project.

The Iraqi Government has been keen to entrench the culture of human rights and has achieved progress in that area by establishing a national system to control and monitor violations of human rights. Monitoring teams were formed in the Ministry of Human Rights to cooperate with human rights departments in all other ministries. The Iraqi Government, in cooperation with UNAMI, drafted a law pertaining to the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Iraq.

On the regional and international levels, the past few months have witnessed a regional and international openness towards Iraq since Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki travelled to Jordan and the United Arab Emirates and made a European visit to Italy and Germany. Iraq has also been visited by a number of high-level delegations from the Gulf States, as well as by the Turkish Prime Minister and the head of the al-Mustaqbal bloc in the Lebanese Parliament, Mr. Saad al-Hariri. Some Arab countries have sent messages expressing their desire to develop political and diplomatic relations with Iraq. Those visits have resulted in a positive change in attitude towards Iraq. The Governments of Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan have announced the nomination of their ambassadors to Baghdad.

Furthermore, the visits of senior officials have resulted in the conclusion of several economic, security, trade and investment agreements with Iraq. We would like to mention here with appreciation the initiative of the Government of the United Arab Emirates to forgive Iraq's debts of $7 billion.

The meeting of the International Compact with Iraq held in Stockholm, Sweden, in late May 2008 achieved many positive results. The meeting welcomed the proposal to form a new partnership for development that includes the co-financing of new programmes with the international partners and has certain arrangements with the Paris Club with regard to Iraqi debt settlement. In that regard, my delegation would like to call on all brotherly Arab countries to promote their historical role with respect to their brothers in Iraq by forgiving Iraq's debts and to reconsider the percentage of the compensation payments imposed on Iraq because of the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, a crime committed by the former dictatorial regime.

I would like to highlight the important role played by UNAMI in Iraq in providing support and advice to the Iraqi Government on the political, humanitarian, human rights, national reconciliation and constitutional processes, as stipulated in resolution 1770 (2007).

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate my Government's request that the mandate of UNAMI be extended for another year, in recognition of its important role in implementing its mandate in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

In demonstration of my Government's keenness to facilitate UNAMI's execution of its mandate, the Iraqi Government has decided to allocate a 40,000-square metre parcel of land in the international zone for its new integrated headquarters for 25 years. We hope that UNAMI will provide support and assistance in accordance with certain mechanisms and with the prior approval of the Iraqi Government. We also look forward to UNAMI having a more effective and influential role through the return of the United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes to work inside Iraq and to contribute to Iraq's reconstruction.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): As this is the first time I am speaking this month at an official meeting of the Council on behalf of the Viet Nam delegation, I would like to extend to you, Sir, and to the delegation of Belgium our most heartfelt congratulations on your assumption of the presidency

for this month. You can rest assured of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation in the discharge of your noble task.

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his detailed briefing. I also thank Ambassador Wolff of the United States for his briefing on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq. We welcome the participation of the delegation of Iraq in this debate and thank its Ambassador for his statement.

During the four months since the most recent report of the Secretary-General was issued, Iraq has continued to make commendable efforts to consolidate and expand its political and socio-economic achievements, as reflected in the lowest levels of overall violence since March 2004; the promulgation of key legislation on justice, amnesty, provincial powers and budget execution; the enhanced capabilities of Iraqi security forces to independently maintain national security and the rule of law; the intensive preparations for the provincial elections scheduled for October 2008; the recent participation of all political factions in the Cabinet; and the Government's announcement of a six-point proposal entitled "Partnership for Development". Equally noteworthy are macroeconomic records in increased domestic consumption, the revival of local businesses nationwide, a gross domestic product growth projected by the International Monetary Fund to be 8 per cent for the next two years, the decrease in inflation, the gradual settlement of external debt burdens, and significant revenues from oil exports.

Against that backdrop, Iraq still faces challenges that remind us of the magnitude of the tasks to be completed in order to facilitate the country's smooth transition to durable peace and sustainable development. They include sectarian violence and criminal acts, as manifested in the recent suicide bombings in Baghdad and some other areas; the delayed adoption of a package of laws on election and hydrocarbons; the unresolved status of Kirkuk; and the alarming rates of poverty and unemployment, as well as the humanitarian challenges caused by the internal and external displacement of Iraqi civilians. At the same time, much remains to be desired for enhancing national dialogue and reconciliation, advancing the legislative agenda and the constitutional review, curbing the illicit use of weapons and combating organized crime, promoting disarmament, demobilizing and reintegrating ex-combatants, creating an environment conducive to foreign and domestic investment and fostering socio-economic reform.

Given the aforementioned progress that the Iraqi people and Government have achieved, and given the challenges they are still facing, my delegation — while firmly supporting the Iraqi people in their endeavour to tap their vast natural and human resources and promote their cause of reconciliation, stabilization and reconstruction — recognizes the important role that United Nations agencies, neighbouring countries and the international community can play in this connection. We are encouraged by a series of international events, including the meetings of Iraq's neighbours in Istanbul and Kuwait, the meeting of Arab parliamentarians in Erbil and the Compact Annual Review Conference in Stockholm, which reflect the international community's engagement in helping Iraq's reconstruction, development and reintegration. Along with other encouraging developments such as the operationalization of regional working groups on energy, refugees and security and the normalization of bilateral relations between Iraq and neighbouring countries, we hope that this emerging partnership and cooperation will be sustained and will be translated into further concrete action to serve mutual interests of all relevant stakeholders, on the basis of respect for the political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

My delegation commends the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to assist the Government of Iraq in addressing key priority issues as mandated by Security Council resolution 1770 (2007), especially in terms of advancing national reconciliation, resolving issues of disputed internal territories, extending constitutional and electoral assistance, providing humanitarian relief and promoting regional dialogue. We support the continued presence and enhanced coordination of UNAMI and the United Nations country team in Iraq.

We thank the United States delegation for the draft resolution on this issue and are ready to work constructively with other Council members towards a consensus text for early adoption.

Mr. La Yifan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. Also, we appreciate the outstanding

contribution made by the delegation of Viet Nam last month.

We thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing, and we welcome the briefings provided by Ambassador Wolff and the Permanent Representative of Iraq on the situation in that country.

It has been a year since the Security Council adopted resolution 1770 (2007), which expanded the mandate of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We are pleased to note that, in extremely complex and difficult circumstances, UNAMI has strictly abided by its mandate pursuant to the Council's resolutions and has made good progress on all fronts. Those are facts that we fully acknowledge. Changes and developments in the situation concerning Iraq have created more space for a United Nations role, while posing more challenges to the Organization.

We support a 12-month extension of the current mandate of UNAMI. We hope and expect that Mr. De Mistura and his team will continue to fulfil their mandate with great enthusiasm and professionalism and in an innovative spirit. We wish to stress a number of points with respect to the future of UNAMI.

First, UNAMI should continue close consultations with the Iraqi Government. At the same time, it should increase its engagement with all segments of Iraqi society and carry out all its work in a pragmatic manner, so as to gain as much understanding and support as possible.

Secondly, UNAMI should carry out all its mandated tasks in a comprehensive and balanced way, in areas such as progress on the political front, electoral assistance, constitutional review, regional cooperation, economic reconstruction and the protection of human rights — areas on which UNAMI can do more.

Thirdly, UNAMI should also play a coordinating role in the sphere of humanitarian assistance and economic and social reconstruction, and it should create synergy with the various United Nations offices in Iraq.

And fourthly, the safety and security of United Nations personnel in Iraq is, as always, a key priority. The Iraqi Government and the countries concerned should continue to bear primary responsibility in this area. Any future new arrangement should take full account of concerns regarding the safety of United Nations personnel.

We welcome the remarkable progress that Iraq has achieved in the political, security and reconstruction areas. But we must not ignore the fact that the security situation in Iraq remains fragile and that the number of civilian casualties remains high. Once again, we urge that military activities in Iraq avoid causing civilian casualties to the greatest possible extent. Sustainable security is the basis for the resolution of other problems faced by Iraq. In order to cement the gains made on the security front, further efforts must be made to advance political dialogue and national reconciliation. We hope that all Iraqi parties will put national interests above all else, enhance dialogue and consultation and establish a solid political consensus on important issues such as the country's future. We encourage UNAMI to play an active role in that regard.

The provincial elections now being prepared will be a key step in the Iraqi political process. To ensure that those elections play a positive role in the political process, it is of no less importance to avoid delays than to ensure the impartiality and inclusiveness of the elections themselves.

The security situation, the political process and socio-economic reconstruction are complementary. Iraq abounds in natural and human resources and has vast potential for economic rehabilitation and development. The international community should honour its pledges of assistance to Iraq, fully tapping the potential of mechanisms such as the International Compact with Iraq and the meetings of Foreign Ministers of neighbouring countries so as to further promote the development and reconstruction of Iraq.

Although Iraq continues to face all manner of challenges and difficulties, we firmly believe that the situation will gradually improve. Like the peoples of every other sovereign State, the Iraqi people have the right and the ability to govern their own affairs and to live their lives in dignity, free from want and fear.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you and your delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August and to reaffirm my delegation's intention to support you in your work. I wish also to thank the delegation of

Viet Nam for its excellent work during the month of July.

I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing. Also, I thank Ambassador Wolff of the United States for his statement on behalf of the Multinational Force, and I thank the Permanent Representative of Iraq for his statement.

Costa Rica welcomes the improvement of the still-delicate situation in Iraq. We acknowledge the endeavours of the Iraqi Government, with the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Multinational Force. In that regard, my country supports the renewal of the mandate of UNAMI and welcomes the fact that this will take place on terms satisfactory to the Government of Iraq.

In our view, the United Nations presence has been decisive in the progress that has been made. We recognize and value the relations that UNAMI maintains with the Government of Iraq and we advocate its continued strengthening. The extended mandate of UNAMI, the leadership of Special Representative De Mistura and the commitment of his staff have made it possible for UNAMI to become a facilitator of solutions, an agent for change and an ally in the peacebuilding and sustainable development of Iraq. The natural role of the United Nations in Iraq is to be a promoter of development, a facilitator of change and a catalyst for the improvement of the living conditions of the Iraqi people.

Iraq's problems can be solved only through reconciliation and understanding among Iraqis without exclusion. The immediate attention that must be paid to the security situation must go hand in hand with a process of extending the legitimacy of the Government and its institutions. It is for the international community to support all endeavours to promote inclusive and meaningful political dialogue, as indicated by the Secretary-General in his report (*S/2008/495*).

In the tasks of dialogue and reconciliation, of particular importance is the process of electoral preparation being carried out in Iraq with a view to the provincial elections. Here, we urge the adoption of the necessary legislation providing guarantees to all political configurations for the important process in October and conferring all the necessary legitimacy on the result of these electoral processes.

Sustainable peace is the result of a delicate combination of factors that can provide the certainty of achieving a better future through effort and discipline. In that regard, Costa Rica wishes to emphasize the need to pay special attention to two aspects.

First, there is a need for public investment, particularly public investment that is more dynamic, broader and effective for development. There is also a need to ensure that the security situation is not improved at the expense of fundamental freedoms, the protection of the civilian population and the human rights of all. With regard to public investment, we believe that Iraq should exploit and invest as quickly as possible the profits from its considerable oil income. That which, for countries like Costa Rica, represents an economic burden can and must be an opportunity to promote the development of the people of oil exporting countries, and in this particular case the people of Iraq.

The second aspect that we would underline as an indispensable ingredient for peace is the necessary balance to be struck between public security, fundamental freedoms and the enforcement and full enjoyment of human rights. Costa Rica joins in the Secretary-General's call on all security forces in Iraq, including the Iraqi Security Forces, to continue to do everything possible to avoid harming civilians and the disproportionate use of force.

Political dialogue, reconciliation, strengthening the legitimacy of the Government and its institutions, the necessary improvement in the security situation without undermining the rule of law, and increasing investment in the people and their welfare are the keys to a promising future for the Iraqi people. The United Nations has a fundamental role to play in accompanying these complex processes.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I join my colleagues in welcoming you, Mr. President, to your role as President of the Council for the month of August, and express our thanks to Ambassador Le Luong Minh and his team for the excellent way that they guided the Security Council last month.

I would also like to join colleagues in thanking the Under-Secretary-General for his presentation on the Secretary-General's report. We also thank the United States representative for his presentation on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq. It was very good to see the Iraqi ambassador here again today, and I express my thanks to him for the work that his Government is

doing and for its cooperation with the coalition forces, which are pleased to work with strong Iraqi leadership.

The United Nations continues to play a vital role in Iraq's development as a democratic and stable country, and on behalf of my Government I would also like to thank the United Nations and the whole of its Iraq team for the important work that they do.

As the Secretary-General acknowledges in his report, and as echoed by most of the speakers today, thanks to operations led by the Iraqi Security Forces with support from coalition troops, violent incidents across Iraq are at their lowest level since 2004, and more generally the security situation across the whole of Iraq continues to improve. The Iraqi Government has taken tough action against armed groups and militias, regardless of sectarian affiliation, and Iraqi security forces are delivering on their responsibilities. The improved security situation has provided a platform for further essential progress on reconciliation. We have seen not only increased cooperation between Sunni communities and the Iraqi Government in areas such as Anbar and Mosul, and the return of the Tawafuq Sunni bloc to the Government, but also the passage of key legislation that is helping to embed democracy. The next stage will be provincial elections, which will reinforce the political progress made at the national level. They will allow those who did not participate in the last provincial elections in January 2005 to enter the political process and they will contribute to the political reconciliation that the Secretary-General rightly highlights in his report as required for long-term stability.

As previous speakers have said, we recognize, of course, that progress is fragile and that we cannot take it for granted. Millions of Iraqis remain displaced, the infrastructure continues to suffer the impact of 30 years of mismanagement, and the level of unemployment remains too high. The attacks in Baghdad and Kirkuk last week remind us that there are groups that are still determined to inflict violence and create instability.

I would like to use this occasion, if I may, to say a few words about the British role in Iraq, particularly in the light of some recent misinformed press speculation. It was very good, also, to hear from the Iraqi Ambassador just now how successful Iraqi-led military operations have been in parts of Iraq.

The British Prime Minister explained the latest United Kingdom plans in a statement made on 22 July 2008, but I would like briefly, if I may, to summarize those plans here. Ten months ago, we set out the key elements of our strategy for handing over security in Basra to the Iraqis and we set up stages for completing the tasks we had set for ourselves.

The initial phase was completed when Basra was transferred to provincial Iraqi control in December of last year. That transfer reflected a judgement on our part that the Iraqi authorities and security forces were ready to take the lead in delivering security in Basra, a judgement that has been borne out by the Iraqi Security Forces' subsequent decisive action to establish the rule of law in Basra and to conduct successful operations, to which we were pleased provide support.

The Iraqis are now very much in the lead in Basra, and the over 4,000 British troops remaining in southern Iraq are focused on completing 13 key tasks in support of that Iraqi lead. Those key tasks include completing the training and mentoring of the fourteenth division of the Iraqi army in Basra, including through the embedding of around 800 personnel in the fourteenth division command structure; finalizing the preparation of Basra airport for civilian control; and continuing to develop the capacity of the Iraqi navy and marines to protect territorial waters, the port and oil platforms.

As we complete those tasks, and as progress continues in those different areas, we will continue to reduce the number of British troops in Iraq. Of course, future decisions will, as they have always been, be based on the advice of our military commanders on the ground and will be taken in consultation with the Government of Iraq and our coalition partners. We expect a fundamental change of mission in the first months of 2009 as we make the transition to a normal bilateral relationship with Iraq similar to those that we have with other key partners in the region.

Sustainable progress in Iraq will be achieved only with continued support from the international community. As we have heard today, important challenges lie ahead. Some of these include the need for progress on key nation-building issues, such as the review of the constitution and disputed internal boundaries; the provincial elections scheduled for later this year; the humanitarian situation, both inside and outside Iraq; developing the infrastructure essential for promoting and protecting human rights; and the need to support the maturing Iraqi democratic structures and

institutions. We welcome the involvement of the United Nations in these issues and we will continue to work with the Organization to ensure that these challenges are overcome in a timely fashion.

Let me conclude by saying that the United Kingdom remains committed to Iraq through our United Nations and coalition obligations. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all Member States to support both the United Nations work in Iraq and the work of the Government of Iraq. But above all, I would like to make it clear that we will stand by the commitment we have made to the people of Iraq to ensure that Iraq continues to develop as a democratic, prosperous and stable country, free from terrorist violence and secure within its borders, and a stable presence in the region.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia): As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor this month, we would like to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency for the month of August and assure you of our full support. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Le Luong Minh of Viet Nam and his delegation for their excellent work last month. My delegation would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his informative briefing, as well as Ambassador Wolff for his update on the ongoing efforts on the part of the Multinational Force in Iraq and the Permanent Representative of Iraq for his remarks.

The present report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (S/2008/495) once again has shown that Iraq is making strong, albeit measured, progress, especially in the security and political fields. Croatia welcomes the assessment, made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 56 of his report, that "Thanks to concerted political and military efforts ... there has been continued improvement in the security situation across Iraq". We believe that these efforts, aimed at creating an adequate and reliable, as well as a safe and secure, security environment for all Iraqis, are commendable.

Although we note that casualties among both Iraq's security forces and the civilian population continue to occur at unacceptably high levels, we have noted with satisfaction the increased cooperation and partnership demonstrated by local officials with the Government, which has been coupled with renewed efforts by the Iraqi Security Forces to break the cycle of violence. This strengthened cooperation with local elements has proven to be crucial to the success of a number of security operations conducted during the reporting period against rebel or terrorist groups, with increasing levels of success.

That said, we do recognize, as is mentioned not only in the report of the Secretary-General, but also in the draft resolution of UNAMI's extension, that many security challenges remain in Iraq. More needs to be done to ensure civic and political freedoms, and the wider human rights situation throughout Iraq remains alarming. While we understand the many challenges associated with simultaneously attempting to strengthen and uphold the institutions of democracy while faced with armed rebel groups and criminal gangs responsible for abductions, assassinations and numerous other crimes, we hope that in addressing these issues the Iraqi police and security forces will manage to strike the necessary balance between public safety and upholding international humanitarian and human rights law on the one hand, and the need to stamp out the operations of these criminal gangs on the other.

While it goes without saying that security must be a prerequisite for any successful political process, we also need to keep in mind that democracy is an ongoing practice that requires both time and resources to succeed. We welcome UNAMI's continued work with Iraq's Independent Electoral Commission and welcome what was just mentioned by the Permanent Representative of Iraq: that with UNAMI's professional guidance and assistance, the Government has been able to overcome the remaining problems associated with the passing of the new provincial election law, including on the inclusion of women candidates. The adoption of the election law will not only provide a platform in which local elections can take place this year, but will also give ordinary Iraqis a chance to make a difference in those areas with which they are best acquainted: their local communities.

The constitutional review impasse continues to be of concern for my delegation, especially as the stumbling blocks to the success of this operation are being revisited time and again. We hope that the Constitutional Review Committee, which itself recognizes that the stumbling blocks are mainly political in nature, manages to use the time requested until the end of this year in order to address these issues and finalize its report.

Moreover, we continue to be concerned with the persistent and ongoing problems associated with the passage of laws on hydrocarbons, especially when taking into account Iraq's increasing oil revenues, which need to be managed effectively and responsibly for the benefit of all Iraqis. We hope that the committee of central and regional Government officials, established to resolve these outstanding issues, will complete its work in a timely manner.

Croatia also welcomes the confidence-building efforts being conducted by UNAMI with regard to helping to address the issue of disputed internal boundaries, with the analyses conducted and presented on several areas in northern Iraq. It also hopes that the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan regional government will continue to use the good offices and advisory role provided by UNAMI to find a solution to the internal boundaries question as soon as possible.

We recognize that, as was mentioned in previous reports, wider regional cooperation and dialogue are crucial for the long-term stabilization and prosperity of Iraq and its surroundings. The active and willing engagement of neighbouring countries in strengthening Iraq's international standing is essential in this process. We are pleased to see that a number of neighbouring countries — Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates — have announced that they will be resuming full diplomatic representation in Baghdad. We welcome especially the visit by Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan to Iraq in July this year. This, along with Iraq's accession to the Gulf Cooperation Council, the successful holding of the third expanded Ministerial Conference of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq, held in Kuwait in April this year, as well as the high-level International Compact with Iraq Annual Review Conference, held in Sweden in May, are all vital for Iraq's continued reconstruction and development.

Allow me to finish by reiterating Croatia's belief that UNAMI, under the able leadership of Special Representative De Mistura and his staff, continues to be well placed to undertake a central and leading role in the international efforts aimed at helping Iraq overcome the plethora of challenges it is still faced with, including but not limited to its role in assisting the central and local governments in advancing political as well as economic dialogue, assisting in the constitutional reform process and facilitating dialogue on the regional level.

The progress achieved thus far gives us hope that the Iraqi people are determined to overcome these challenges so as to transform Iraq into a fully integrated and consolidated member of the international community. We support them in that goal.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I should like to congratulate Ambassador Le Luong Minh and the delegation of Viet Nam on their successful guidance of the Security Council in July, and to wish you, Sir, equal success for the delegation of Belgium in doing your difficult job as President of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe, who introduced the report describing the situation in Iraq and the work of the United Nations structures (S/2008/495). We listened with interest to the comments of the Permanent Representative of Iraq, Mr. Al-Bayati, who has given us an assessment by his country's authorities regarding recent events there. We are also grateful to Ambassador Wolff for his briefing on the activities of the Mulitnational Force in Iraq.

On the whole, the report submitted to us objectively reflects today's realities in Iraq. We agree with most of the report's findings and conclusions. We are pleased to note that the report describes a certain amount of progress on security, which has taken place in some Iraqi governorates. However, it is still too soon to talk about the irreversibility of that process.

In recent days and weeks, certain high-impact terrorist acts have taken place in Baghdad and Kirkuk, and several less sensational but no less ruthless clashes and attacks have been committed by extremists in various areas of the country. We support the approach of Iraqi leaders and all political forces to achieve a lasting settlement by advancing a real, comprehensive inter-Iraqi dialogue and by strengthening national reconciliation and understanding. In that connection, we think that expediting the adoption of laws regarding local elections and hydrocarbon is critically important to the sustainable political and economic development of the country and to the stabilization of the situation there as a whole.

We note the active efforts made by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to help Iraq resolve those challenges. We believe that, in that context, the question of maintaining the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq remains a top priority. An important event in that regard will be the elections to

the local organs of power, preparations for which are under way with the active assistance of UNAMI. We believe that the elections should take place in transparent conditions and that the results must be accepted by all Iraqis.

An equally important goal is the facilitation of a settlement in Iraq by the States of the region and by the international community as a whole. In that regard, steps are being taken, in terms both of political issues, as mentioned in the report — for example, the opening of new embassies in Baghdad — and of economic issues, which include in particular processes to write off Iraq's foreign debt. We are pleased to note that, following the lead of the Russian Federation, a number of other countries are stepping up to resolve that problem.

We welcome the prospect of establishing a general time frame for the presence of foreign troops in Iraq. We think it is important that the appropriate agreements not infringe on Iraq's sovereignty or cause new conflicts or fissures in Iraqi society. We believe that a democratic, unified Iraq, strengthened in its sovereignty, will become an important factor for the stability of the Persian Gulf region and for the entire Middle East.

We agree with the concerns expressed in the report of the Secretary-General about the serious violations of human rights in Iraq. We support the goal of UNAMI to continue to work with the Government of Iraq and Iraqi officials to put an end to impunity and to redress the human rights situation as a whole. We support UNAMI's practice of preparing periodic reports describing the humanitarian and human rights situation in Iraq. Those reports must include statistics about the number of civilian casualties, which unfortunately remain high.

We strongly condemn attacks on civilians and civilian deaths resulting from indiscriminate and excessive uses of force. There is no justification for armed groups that use suicide bombers and engage in the process of hostage-taking to attain their goals.

We are very concerned about the activities of private security companies and other mercenary structures in Iraq, which often violate the rights of innocent civilians and the norms of international humanitarian law.

We welcome the recent accession by Iraq to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. We call upon all parties to implement resolution 1612 (2005), including the full deployment in Iraq of a monitoring and reporting mechanism. We hope that those steps will help mitigate the inhumane treatment of children in Iraq, including the detention of underage children in military jails in contravention of international standards, and the still widespread practice of using child soldiers.

In conclusion, allow me to once again express our profound gratitude to the United Nations personnel, who, in extremely difficult conditions in today's Iraq, are valiantly and effectively doing their jobs, as defined in the Security Council's mandate.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): Allow me to first congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of our work in August and to express our heartfelt thanks to the Vietnamese delegation for its excellent work and stewardship of the Council in the intense month of July.

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe; the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States, Ambassador Wolff; and the Permanent Representative of Iraq, Ambassador Al Bayati, for their thorough and informative remarks.

Italy welcomes the improvements in the security situation in Iraq and greatly appreciates the progress made by the Iraqi authorities and the Iraqi Security Forces to counter terrorism and unlawful armed groups in a framework of growing self-reliance and ownership by those authorities and with increasing cooperation from local communities. Further improvements in the security framework are indispensable to promoting economic and social growth.

It is therefore our hope that the objective of completing the transfer of responsibility for security to Iraq — which has already taken place in 10 out of 18 governorates — will soon be achieved in all governorates. Increasing the reliability of the Iraqi Security Forces is one of the objectives to which Italy attaches the utmost importance and to which it contributes concretely through its participation in the NATO training mission.

As stated by the Secretary-General in his report (*S/2008/495*), the security and political gains of the

past months have to be sustained through meaningful political dialogue and national reconciliation. All expressions of democracy in the country should be included in the political process so as to enable the consolidated political dialogue to make a strong contribution to improving security conditions. We also appreciate any measure aimed at countering sectarianism or attempts to discriminate against ethnic and religious minorities.

To consolidate the progress made thus far, we also appreciate the efforts to offset the potentially negative effects of the question of Kirkuk and other contested areas. We fully support the United Nations initiative for an agreed political solution articulated through a gradual approach, starting with the administrative reform of the less problematic areas. We also encourage all Iraqi political forces to do their utmost to reach an agreement on an electoral law so as to be able to hold provincial elections within the year.

We are also most appreciative of the recent allocations decided on by the Iraqi Government to alleviate the conditions of refugees in Syria and Jordan and of internally displaced persons, as well as initiatives to foster their re-entry and reinsertion into the country. That is an issue that deserves all our attention.

Finally, allow me to state once again Italy's belief in the central role that the United Nations — through the brave and committed efforts of Special Representative De Mistura and all national and international staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) — can play in helping Iraqis, in accordance with the broad mandate provided by resolution 1770 (2004). We are therefore honoured and proud to be one of the sponsors of the draft resolution that, on the basis of a request by the Iraqi Government, will renew UNAMI's mandate for one more year.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your delegation on your assumption of your responsibilities as President of the Security Council for the month of August. I wish also to express our profound appreciation to Ambassador Le Luong Minh and the delegation of Viet Nam for their able stewardship of the Council's work in the past month.

I would like to join others in thanking the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Lynn Pascoe, for his comprehensive briefing, Ambassador Wolff of the United States for his statement on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq, and the Permanent Representative of Iraq for his important remarks.

The continued improvements in security across Iraq during the past three months have given the country and its people a chance to achieve peace, stability and prosperity. My delegation recognizes the contribution of combined political and military efforts to that progress.

Despite the positive developments, security in Iraq remains fragile. The recent suicide bombings in Baghdad and Kirkuk that claimed a considerable number of civilian casualties are a reminder that investment in security is still of paramount importance. We recognize the significance of the military efforts by the Iraqi Security Forces in building peace and stability in Iraq. We welcome the fact that the Iraqi Security Forces are gaining confidence and capability, with an increasing number of units capable of leading operations.

My delegation continues to underline the importance of the protection of civilians. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/495), civilian casualties in Iraq have often been caused by the failure of all parties to the conflict to make the distinction between combatants and civilians, as well as by disproportionate attacks on civilian areas. My delegation therefore reaffirms that all parties should respect international human rights and humanitarian law and continue to take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of affected civilians. We also share the concern of the Secretary-General over the psychosocial impact of violence and deprivation on millions of Iraqi children. We recognize the need for greater efforts and resources to address that challenge.

Military initiative alone cannot offer a solution. Achieving sustainable peace in Iraq will also require meaningful and inclusive political dialogue and reconciliation across the various divides. Significant support from all segments of the Iraqi population is critical to the achievement of long-term stability in the country. My delegation therefore believes that it is important for the people of Iraq to resort to peaceful means in settling disputes and to engage in political dialogue and reconciliation. The reconciliation meeting in Helsinki on 29 April 2008, which involved

30 representatives from Iraq's main political and ethnic groups, was a welcome step.

My delegation also recognizes the importance of the political progress that Iraq has achieved to the stability of the country. We welcome some recent positive steps aimed at strengthening unity within the Iraqi Government. The upcoming provincial elections will be an important stage in the democratic process in Iraq. We welcome the role of the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq in that regard. We also recognize the challenges that Iraq continues to face in the early passage of its electoral law and in the constitutional review process. We welcome the commitment of the Government of Iraq to making progress in those efforts.

The current growing relations between Iraq and its neighbouring countries are a laudable development. We welcome the convening in Kuwait of the third expanded Ministerial Conference of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq on 22 April 2008, as well as the first annual review conference of the International Compact with Iraq in Stockholm on 29 May 2008. We continue to attach primary importance to the International Compact with Iraq, which serves as a new partnership between Iraq and the international community in achieving the consolidation of peace and comprehensive development.

The continued presence of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and its contribution in Iraq remains pertinent and essential, considering the ongoing efforts of the Government and the people of Iraq towards economic development, embracing democracy, good governance and the rule of law, and promoting peace and stability.

UNAMI's role in supporting the secretariat of the International Compact with Iraq in Baghdad and in the review of its management to increase its effectiveness is commendable. Its assistance to the electoral processes at the governorate level, its support for reconciliation efforts and its contribution to establishing a process to address disputed boundaries are also laudable. We recognize the request of the Government of Iraq for UNAMI to continue its presence and its work in Iraq. Mindful also of UNAMI's important contribution to building a peaceful, stable and prosperous Iraq, my delegation very much welcomes such a request.

Finally, my delegation wishes to reaffirm our support for the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Iraq.

Mr. Suescum (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation joins in the congratulations extended to you, Sir, and to your country as you assume the presidency. We also join in the congratulations extended to Ambassador Le Luong Minh of Viet Nam, his delegation and his country for the excellent way in which he presided over the Council in July. I should also like to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing, as well as the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States and the Permanent Representative of Iraq.

My delegation is pleased to note the positive evolution of the situation in Iraq, particularly in terms of security, with the exception of the recent attacks in Baghdad and Kirkuk. The ceasefire in Sadr City remains in force, with tangible benefits for the people, and the reintegration of the various political blocs into the Government represents significant and noteworthy progress. However, the Council must take into account the remarks of the Secretary-General to the effect that the situation is still critical and that the challenge requires redoubled efforts on the part of the Government of Iraq, as well as the combined efforts of all sectors of the population and the continued cooperation of the international community.

We acknowledge the important work being carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to assist the Government of Iraq in developing an inclusive electoral system that will allow the holding of fair and transparent elections guaranteeing the participation of all. A peaceful Iraq also requires certain important common goals to be achieved, such as the law on hydrocarbons and the demarcation of internal boundaries. We should like to thank the Ambassador of Iraq for the information he has provided to us today on the progress made in those matters.

The delegation of Panama notes with optimism the recent initiatives of regional and international dialogue, in particular the commitments achieved at the meeting of the International Compact with Iraq in Stockholm and the decisions of Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates to reopen their diplomatic missions in Iraq. Those events reaffirm the

commitment of the international community to the cause of Iraq. We should also like to acknowledge the gesture by the United Arab Emirates in cancelling Iraq's debt.

Despite all those endeavours, the humanitarian situation in Iraq remains critical and deserves the greatest attention of the United Nations and Iraq. While we acknowledge the work that has been done, we also urge UNAMI and the Government of Iraq, in particular, to strengthen their response with regard to the basic needs of the most vulnerable population groups both within the borders of Iraq and beyond, so as to provide aid to the refugees in the region and to guarantee their safe and voluntary return. We also urge the international community to lend its efforts and cooperation to that difficult task.

Lastly, we note with concern the observations of the Secretary-General indicating that the human rights situation in Iraq remains alarming. The Council must pay more attention to the report prepared by the UNAMI Human Rights Office. To that end, the cycle of reports and discussion thereof must be improved. We are concerned about the serious situation of children, reports of gender violence and the excessive use of force against civilians, and the position of detainees. The consolidation and development of political and administrative institutions in Iraq must go hand in hand with security and the respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of its people. Here we echo the appeal to Iraq by the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to enhance its system of protection and information with regard to human rights.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and to express the thanks of the French delegation to the representative of Viet Nam and his delegation for the excellent work accomplished during Viet Nam's presidency last month. I should also like to thank Mr. Pascoe and Ambassador Wolff for their briefings.

France has noted with satisfaction the continued progress made in Iraq over the past several months in the area of security. In that regard, we welcome the increased transfer of responsibilities to the Iraqi forces and the efforts of the Iraqi Government. Disarmament of the militias is an important objective aimed at full restoration of State authority with regard to the security and maintenance of order. That initial progress, which has been made in particular as a result of the efforts of the Iraqi authorities, must now be supported by responses to the persistent challenges facing the people and the Government of Iraq. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has an important role to play in that respect.

The first challenge is the essential process of national reconciliation and constitutional review, which are objectives crucial to the consolidation of the Iraqi State. That process must be inclusive and must make it possible to isolate the forces that want Iraq to fail. It requires cooperation by all Iraqi political leaders, who must agree on an equitable sharing of power and resources on a consensual basis. It is now urgent that their stated intentions be translated into action. France hopes that UNAMI will continue its work of advising and supporting the Iraqi Government in carrying out political reforms and holding elections, which are essential for the consolidation of democratic institutions, the promotion of national dialogue and the reintegration of illegal armed groups.

The second challenge is related to the humanitarian and human rights situations. The humanitarian situation remains particularly worrisome. The French delegation welcomes the work done by UNAMI and all the United Nations entities concerned, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as the efforts of neighbouring States. It is now important that the Iraqi Government honour its commitments — particularly its financial commitment — with a view to the sustainable and safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights are also important commitments undertaken by the Iraqi Government at the Compact with Iraq Annual Review Conference, held in Stockholm on 29 May — commitments that we encourage. UNAMI's reports on the human rights situation in Iraq arouse great concern on the part of the French delegation, particularly with regard to observance of the rights of the many detainees held in Iraq. France fully supports UNAMI's work in that area and calls on all actors concerned to intensify their efforts. France and the European Union will continue to help to strengthen the rule of law in Iraq.

The third challenge concerns the economy. The French delegation welcomes the consolidation of Iraq's budgetary resources. That should make it possible for the Iraqi Government to continue to rebuild the country and to improve its people's access to basic services, in keeping with the aforementioned commitments undertaken at the first ministerial-level International Compact with Iraq Annual Review Conference. My delegation supports the work carried out by UNAMI in coordination with the Iraqi Government. However, the results will depend in particular on progress in the areas of financial transparency and economic governance.

Finally, the fourth challenge concerns the regional process. The support of countries in the region that have expressed a willingness to contribute to the stability and reconstruction of Iraq remains crucial. We welcome in particular the involvement of neighbouring States in the process begun at Sharm el-Sheikh in May 2007, on which there has been progress, as we were able to note at the expanded Ministerial Conference of Neighbours held in Kuwait on 22 April 2008. Here again, the role of UNAMI, in cooperation with the Iraqi Government, is important, as shown by the establishment of an ad hoc follow-up mechanism within the Iraqi Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

I should like to conclude my statement by welcoming the initial results obtained on the ground by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, thanks in particular to the personal commitment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura. My delegation reaffirms its full support for the efforts made by UNAMI under its mandate, which was strengthened by resolution 1770 (2007). We hope that the mandate will be renewed for one year, as provided for by the draft resolution circulated by the United States delegation.

In accordance with resolution 1770 (2007), those efforts should be carried out in a safe environment. Since in a few days' time we will be commemorating the fifth anniversary of the attack on the United Nations in Baghdad, which claimed the lives of 22 people, including Sergio Vieira de Mello, I should like to stress that — particularly given the possibility that the mandate of the Multinational Force might not be renewed at the end of the year — all the actors concerned should plan and take the measures necessary to maintain an appropriate level of security to ensure the smooth functioning of the Mission.

France, which currently holds the presidency of the European Union, is committed to the unity, sovereignty and integrity of a democratic Iraq. We wish to stress the Union's willingness to assist the Iraqis, in support of United Nations efforts, in restoring the peace and security to which they are entitled within a united and richly diverse State.

Ms. Qwabe (South Africa): We join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We also thank the delegation of Viet Nam for the good work done last month. In addition, we thank Mr. Pascoe, the representative of the United States and the Permanent Representative of Iraq for their briefings.

We note the relatively positive developments that have taken place over the past few weeks in Iraq. These include enhanced cooperation, both among political groups in Iraq and between Iraq and neighbouring countries. However, notwithstanding those positive developments, fundamental challenges remain. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/495) indicates, high levels of violence continue and civilian casualties remain unacceptably high.

The Secretary-General also reports that the human rights situation remains serious, particularly the violations of the human rights of civilians and detainees. Moreover, the dire humanitarian situation continues to have a negative impact on Iraqi and regional stability. A recent report from Refugees International indicates that more than 2 million Iraqi refugees live in neighbouring countries and that almost 3 million Iraqis are internally displaced. The continued delays regarding the finalization of the electoral and hydrocarbon laws, which are central to equitable representation and the equitable distribution of natural resources, are a further destabilizing factor.

We welcome the initiatives of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to establish a process for addressing disputed internal boundaries in Iraq. We also support all of UNAMI's efforts to assist the Iraqi people and Government in strengthening institutions for a representative Government, in promoting political dialogue and national reconciliation and in engaging with neighbouring countries. Indeed, the work of the United Nations in Iraq is testament to the international community's

determination to help the Iraqi people move beyond the current crisis.

South Africa therefore continues to support the presence of UNAMI in Iraq under its present mandate, in line with our commitment to multilateralism and conflict resolution. We believe that the United Nations has a particularly important role to play with regard to national reconciliation in Iraq. As the Secretary-General has previously indicated, the United Nations not only enjoys good relations with all parties across the political spectrum in Iraq, but also brings to the table its considerable experience and best practices gained from operating in other conflict situations. However, an expanded role for the United Nations, as foreseen in resolution 1770 (2007), can be realized only as circumstances permit. The safety of United Nations personnel must be an overriding consideration.

We conclude by reiterating the observation made by the Secretary-General in the present report that the gains made so far need to be sustained through meaningful political dialogue and national reconciliation. Time is of the essence, and Iraq can no longer afford continued delays in finding political solutions.

Mr. Tiendrébéogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We also express our gratitude to the delegation of Viet Nam for its outstanding conduct of our work last month.

Allow me also to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe for his briefing and Ambassador Wolff for describing the situation with regard to the implementation of the mandate of the Multinational Force in Iraq. I further thank the Permanent Representative of Iraq for his important statement.

We are pleased to note that the overall situation in Iraq is improving, but it is clear that major challenges remain, in particular with regard to security. Fortunately, we note encouraging signs at the national level and welcome the ongoing compliance with the ceasefire in Sadr City, announced on 11 May, allowing for the gradual restoration of essential services and State authority in that neighbourhood. We also stress the good cooperation among local communities in preventing acts of violence and the ongoing capacity-building of the security forces.

The return to the Government of groups that were boycotting the political process reflects the considerable progress that has been made at the political level. Burkina Faso welcomes the dialogue begun among the Iraqi parties and facilitated by the meetings held in Helsinki on 29 April and in Baghdad on 5 July. We urge them to maintain and expand that process and to comply with the decisions taken at those meetings.

Furthermore, the risks of disagreement concerning the constitutional review process, the draft electoral law and hydrocarbons legislation must be mitigated. Equally important to national reconciliation is the delicate question of internal boundaries, which should be resolved as soon as possible through negotiation.

My delegation appreciates the regional efforts being made, in particular the high-level contacts between Baghdad and countries of the region, several of which have already announced the reopening of their diplomatic offices and the return of representatives of regional organizations. We urge the entire international community to promote regional dialogue and to maintain its support for the International Compact with Iraq, the implementation of which will help in rebuilding and developing the country.

We welcome the efforts of the Special Representative and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in particular in the quest for a solution to the issues of disputed internal boundaries and electoral assistance. We welcome the considerable fall in the number of attacks on the international zone and encourage all Iraqi parties to continue to cooperate with the Mission.

The Secretary-General's report describes a human rights and humanitarian situation that is still very worrisome. The Iraqi Government and all parties involved in Iraq must take the necessary and effective steps to guarantee respect for human rights, combat impunity and improve the overall humanitarian situation. The international community has a duty of solidarity with the Iraqi people. The country still faces a multitude of challenges, and that is why we support the renewal of the mandates of UNAMI and the Multinational Force, as sought by the Iraqi Government.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I assure you of our full engagement and cooperation with your work.

We also express our appreciation for the excellent work of Ambassador Le Luong Minh and the delegation of Viet Nam in presiding over the Security Council in July.

Allow me further to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing. We highly appreciate the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and thank Ambassador Wolff, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America, for his briefing on the activities of the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I).

We welcome the improved security situation in some regions of Iraq, as clearly reflected in the statistics provided by Ambassador Wolff in his briefing. We also welcome the positive political developments in Iraq, including the end of the boycott of the Government by the Tawafuq bloc. Nevertheless, we wish to caution yet again that the stability of the security situation is contingent on national reconciliation and the conviction of all Iraqi parties that they have the opportunity to contribute to and participate in the governance of the country and to share the country's wealth equally, beyond all sectarian and ethnic considerations. The stability of the security situation is also contingent on the end of the occupation and on convincing Iraqis of their own full sovereignty over their territory.

Regrettably, there is much of concern in the Secretary-General's report (*S/2008/495*).

First is the rising level of violence. Operations undertaken by the MNF-I and Iraqi security forces continue to claim large numbers of civilian casualties. That is perhaps best reflected in paragraph 27 of the report.

Secondly, the human rights situation has been and remains grave. The report notes that

> "The human rights situation in Iraq remains serious ... UNAMI remained concerned about the physical safety and legal protection of hundreds of suspects arrested, as well as detention conditions and lack of due process following detention. Those apparently rounded up as suspects included a number of children." (*S/2008/495, para. 26*)

Furthermore, as a representative of the MNF-I noted recently, the Force is currently detaining 21,000 individuals under the pretext that the United Nations mandate gives the Force the right to detain any person it deems to be a threat to security.

Thirdly, ongoing abuses against children — including their recruitment and attacks on schools and hospitals — are widespread. The report states in paragraph 29 that "[a]pproximately 1,500 children are known to be held in detention facilities for alleged association with armed groups".

Fourthly, it is also a source of concern that refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) continue to face very difficult circumstances. The rate of return — 10,000 per month — is extremely low, which indicates that genuine efforts have not been made to create conditions conducive to return. We hope that the adoption of an Iraqi national policy on refugees and returnees will lessen the suffering of displaced persons and make resettlement easier for them. There have been reports that there are 2.5 million IDPs in Iraq and a similar number of refugees in neighbouring countries. We believe that this issue too merits special attention by the Security Council. We hope that future reports of the Secretary-General will contain greater detail on this matter.

Fifthly, yet another matter of concern is that the adoption of some fundamental laws — such as an electoral law making possible the organization of elections to governorate councils — continues to be delayed. We were delighted to hear the Permanent Representative of Iraq speak of developments in that regard. On other contentious constitutional issues, we are also concerned about the ongoing dispute on the status of Kirkuk.

Libya supports all ongoing efforts towards national reconciliation in Iraq. We support a stable security situation, an end to occupation and the maintenance of Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We greatly appreciate UNAMI's efforts to assist Iraq, along with those of all other United Nations entities. We attach importance to the observations contained in the report of the Secretary-General before us today. In particular, we support his observation that

> "Iraq can no longer afford continued delays in finding viable political solutions. Long-term stability will require significant political buy-in from all segments of the population, many of which are not yet fully engaged in the political process". (*S/2008/495, para. 56*)

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Belgium.

I too take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, Ambassador Le Luong Minh, for the excellent work of his team during the month of July. I also thank members for their good wishes as my country assumes the presidency of the Council for the month of August.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his presentation and Ambassador Wolff for his briefing on behalf of the Multinational Force. My thanks to also to Ambassador Al Bayati for his participation in the Council's debate today.

A year after the adoption of resolution 1770 (2007), Belgium reaffirms its support for the expanded mandate it gave to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We thus welcome the wish of the Iraqi authorities to extend the mandate of UNAMI. That extension will come at a turning point. We have noted the positive developments in the areas of security, national reconciliation and regional dialogue, and more generally we note the increased assumption of responsibility by the Iraqi authorities. But that progress cannot eclipse the magnitude of the challenges that remain; to the contrary, this underscores the urgent need to consolidate that progress.

The first way to do this is by deepening the political dialogue. We welcome the growing political involvement of diverse elements of Iraqi society, but the slow progress in the constitutional review and on the issue of disputed internal boundaries indicate the ongoing difficulty the Iraqis are experiencing in finding a comprehensive agreement on power-sharing and wealth-sharing. Here, Belgium welcomes UNAMI's constant readiness to provide technical assistance and mediation. Such assistance should facilitate the Iraqis' search for responses — responses that they alone have the legitimacy to make.

In that regard, we echo the Secretary-General's appeal for the adoption, as soon as possible, of an electoral law making possible the organization of provincial elections. That would further enhance the inclusiveness and legitimacy of the Iraqi political debate.

I turn secondly to the rule of law. We welcome the assessments of the Secretary-General and of Ambassador Wolff regarding the increased capacity and autonomy of the Iraqi Security Forces. The fatal attacks of recent weeks in Baghdad and Kirkuk should make all stakeholders realize the importance of continuing their efforts to ensure respect for basic principles of the rule of law, in particular regarding the protection of civilians, as well as respect for their fundamental rights, including the rights of detainees.

Thirdly, regarding Iraq's interactions at the regional and international levels, the close cooperation between the United Nations and the Iraqi authorities, in the context of the expanded Conference of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq and the International Compact with Iraq, has made it possible to enhance the role of those mechanisms. Last month's debate provided an opportunity to welcome the willingness shown by the Iraqi Government, along with its neighbours and the entire international community, to deepen the dialogue with the common goal of ensuring the long-term stabilization of Iraq. Although this was reiterated in Kuwait and in Stockholm, it is nonetheless important to recall that this mutually beneficial dialogue must take place in the context of respect by all for the sovereignty of Iraq.

Turning, fourthly, to humanitarian affairs, it is an important underpinning of stability that the progress be reflected in the daily lives of the Iraqi people, starting with those of the 4 million Iraqis who have been forced to flee their homes. Belgium encourages the Government of Iraq to increase its efforts to assist them, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

More generally speaking, we welcome the willingness of the Iraqi authorities to make better use of the country's potential, by progressively taking ownership of reconstruction projects, while relying on an increased presence by United Nations agencies and on their expertise. Here, we noted last month's announcement by the Iraqi Government of its intention not to seek the renewal of the mandate of the

Multinational Force, as well as the start of negotiations on a bilateral security agreement.

I conclude by recalling that the Security Council is duty-bound to ensure that the United Nations mandate is carried out in adequate security conditions. Here, it my honour to announce that it is the intention of my Government to make a contribution of €250,000 to the special trust fund to support United Nations security in Iraq.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5950

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5950th meeting

Thursday, 7 August 2008, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Grauls	(Belgium)
Members:	Burkina Faso	Mr. Koudougou
	China	Mr. Li Kexin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	South Africa	Mr. Laher
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. McKenzie Smith
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1770 (2007) (S/2008/495)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-45318 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1770 (2007) (S/2008/495)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iraq, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/529, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Italy, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/2008/495, which contains the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1770 (2007).

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2008/523, which contains the text of the note verbale dated 4 August 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Iraq transmitting a letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Indonesia, Italy, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Panama, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1830 (2008).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 3.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5951

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5951 st meeting

Friday, 8 August 2008, 1.15 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Grauls	(Belgium)
Members:	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Georgia

Letter dated 7 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/533)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-45458 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 1.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Georgia

Letter dated 7 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/533)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Georgia in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Alasania (Georgia) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in response to a letter dated 7 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, contained in document S/2008/533.

I should like to draw the attention of members to two letters dated 7 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia, which will be issued as documents of the Security Council under the symbols S/2008/534 and S/2008/535.

I call now on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation took the initiative of calling for this emergency meeting of the Security Council because of the alarming situation in South Ossetia, which has been brought about by the blatant and aggressive actions of the Georgian armed forces against that republic, which is an internationally recognized party to the conflict.

During the night of 8 August 2008 local time, literally just a few hours after reaching an agreement on holding negotiations to resolve the escalation in the South Ossetian conflict, Georgian military divisions began a treacherous and massive attack against Tskhinvali. The military option was used by the Georgian authorities despite all the diplomatic efforts that had been undertaken in contacts between Moscow, Tbilisi, Tskhinvali, Washington and other interested capitals.

The Russian Federation has recently and repeatedly warned members of the Council of a likely escalation in the situation. We warned Council members that the Georgian authorities had augmented their offensive forces. Indeed, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe warned of growing militarization in Georgia, as seen in the alarming build-up of the Georgian armed forces. Our warnings were ignored, and the Council is obliged today not only to deal with a resurgence in the conflict but to discuss a situation that represents a threat to regional security and peace.

Because of Georgia's actions, the situation in the conflict zone has now reached a critical phase. Massive artillery fire is being directed against a peaceful civilian population, including old people and children, using Grad multiple launch systems and large-calibre rocket launchers. Shooting is taking place in the centre of the capital of South Ossetia, where dozens of houses are engulfed in flames. According to available information, at 3 a.m. local time, Georgian tanks and infantry began to attack the southern parts of Tskhinvali.

Such policies of the Georgian authorities dramatically contravene the hopes that Tbilisi was promoting. We can already say with certainty that the aggressive acts ordered by the Georgian authorities have done great damage to the peace process and to the prospects of achieving a political or diplomatic settlement. Tbilisi is trying to create a smokescreen around its acts by both blaming the Russian Federation, including Russian television channels, for everything, and talking about peace, in sharp contrast with its actual conduct.

The Georgian military are being more frank about events. A few hours ago, General Mamuka Kurashvili, commander of the peacekeeping contingent of the Georgian armed forces in Georgia, announced in front

of the television cameras that the decision had been taken in Tbilisi to restore constitutional order in South Ossetia — that is, to resolve a long-standing conflict by military means. Even Georgian politicians have let the cat out of the bag: Temur Yakobashvili, State Minister for Reintegration, has said that the goal of his leaders was to put an end to the regime in Tskhinvali.

As a result of all those actions, Tbilisi has totally destroyed the credibility of the Georgian leadership as a responsible party to the negotiating process and, in general, as a member of the international community guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

It is now quite understandable why Tbilisi has, for a long period of time and using many pretexts, stubbornly refused to reach an agreement with South Ossetia and Abkhazia on the non-use of force. Members of the Security Council will recall that that has been the principal element in many Council resolutions. The Russian Federation has insisted on that and will continue to do so. Since the current flare-up of the conflict began, the Russian Federation has done everything possible to de-escalate it. We have sent a special representative of our Minister for Foreign Affairs to the region, and we are using all available leverage to exert positive pressure.

The Security Council must now play its role. We are convinced that the Council must immediately call for an end to the hostilities and for a rejection of the use of force. The Council and the international community as a whole cannot remain on the sidelines at this difficult moment, when the fate of the hundreds of thousands of people living in the region is being decided. Together, we must put an end to the violence, which has serious implications for regional and international security.

There is still time to avoid further casualties, including among the civilian population. The Georgian leadership must reflect and must return to civilized means of resolving difficult issues related to a political settlement. The Russian Federation will continue its efforts to prevent any further bloodshed and to put the situation in South Ossetia back on a peaceful track.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): Let me express my gratitude to the members of the Security Council for this opportunity to address them. Today's special Council meeting is being held to consider the grave escalation of the situation in the Tskhinvali region of Georgia. First, I will reflect on the recent events that have led to that tragic deterioration.

On 1 August, at about 8 a.m. Tbilisi time, a pickup vehicle containing six Georgian police officers was hit by two remote-control explosive devices. As a result of that attack, five Georgian policemen were severely wounded. The central authorities decided not to retaliate, so as not to escalate the situation.

On 2 August, six civilians and one Georgian policeman were injured during the overnight shelling of seven Georgian villages in the South Ossetian conflict zone. The seven Georgian-controlled villages came under intense fire from South Ossetian separatists using large-calibre mortars. Georgian law-enforcement personnel fired back defensively for some time but then received a ceasefire order aimed at not escalating the situation.

On 3 August, the South Ossetian separatist government announced the evacuation of more than 500 people, including 400 children. However, the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia's Republic of North Ossetia told the Interfax news agency that it was not an evacuation; the children were being sent to North Ossetia as part of a prearranged summer camp programme, as he explained it. Russian media outlets started a massive propaganda campaign against Georgia.

Late on 6 August, separatists opened fire with mortars on Georgian-populated villages: Eredvi and four others. Georgian Government forces fired back to defend the civilian population. As a result of intense crossfire during the night, two servicemen belonging to the Georgian battalion of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces were injured. The separatist regime also claimed several injuries on its side. Despite the targeted attacks on the peaceful population and villages, as well as on the Georgian police and peacekeeping forces, the central authorities decided not to respond with a heavy exchange of fire, in order not to injure the local population.

Temur Yakobashvili, Georgian chief negotiator and State Minister for Reintegration, said in late-night televised remarks on 6 August that it was the position of the Georgian Government that only direct dialogue with the Tskhinvali authorities would resolve the

deteriorating security situation. Mr. Yakobashvili also stressed that Ambassador-at-Large Yuri Popov would attend the talks as a facilitator. South Ossetian chief negotiator Boris Chochiev refused to take part in the negotiations.

Overnight and in the early-morning hours of 7 August, intensive fire came from four positions in various Ossetian villages. The separatist authorities continued firing on Georgian law-enforcement personnel and peacekeeping units with mortars and artillery. The central authorities responded with limited fire in order to defend those positions.

In a morning interview with Russian news agencies, South Ossetian de facto President Eduard Kokoity declared that, if the Georgian Government did not withdraw its military forces from the region, he would start to clean them out. President Saakashvili, speaking with journalists at the military hospital in Gori, where he was visiting injured Georgian servicemen, said that, despite the attacks on the Georgian villages, Tbilisi was showing maximum restraint. The President also called on Russia to recall from South Ossetia its officials, who consider themselves the so-called South Ossetian government.

On the morning of 7 August, Temur Yakobashvili visited the conflict zone to meet with representatives of the separatist government. The Minister of State met with Marat Kulakhmetov, Commander of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces, in Tskhinvali. Once again, however, the separatists refused to negotiate with him. Anatoly Barankevich, head of the separatist republic's Security Council, threatened that armed groups of Cossacks from North Ossetia were headed towards South Ossetia to fight Georgian forces.

By 4 p.m. the same day, the separatists had resumed their shelling of Georgian villages. Three Georgian servicemen were injured when the South Ossetian separatist forces blew up an infantry combat vehicle belonging to the Georgian peacekeeping battalion. Georgian police responded by firing towards groups of armed separatists in those villages, killing two separatist militiamen and wounding two others. Later, the Georgian peacekeepers' checkpoint at Avnevi was bombed, and several Georgian servicemen and civilians were killed.

In a live televised address at 7.10 p.m., President Saakashvili said that he had ordered the Georgian forces to cease fire in South Ossetia. He stated that there had been casualties, including both deaths and injuries. Mr. Saakashvili said that he had ordered the ceasefire specifically to give the South Ossetian secessionist regime another opportunity to resume the talks. Despite Georgia's decision not to return fire, the Georgian village of Avnevi once again came under fire from South Ossetian militiamen at approximately 8.30 p.m. The village can be described as having been totally destroyed as a result of that attack.

South Ossetian separatist armed groups fired at the Georgian-controlled village of Prisi at about 10.30 last night. The attack left several people wounded on the Georgian side. At approximately 11.30 p.m., the same separatist authorities opened fire on all Georgian positions around the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali, including those in the villages of Tamarasheni and Kurta. The police station in Kurta was totally destroyed as a result of that heavy fire.

I want to state very clearly that the illegal separatist authorities and armed formations are under the control and direction of the security and defence agencies of the Russian Federation. Numerous high-ranking Russian officers from among the ranks of the peacekeepers, as well as other officials from the Russian military, intelligence, and law-enforcement services, are serving in senior roles in Tskhinvali.

That is a clear violation of Russia's obligation to remain neutral: instead, it has thus become a party to the conflict. These Russian officers and individuals include: Mr. Yuri Morozov, the Prime Minister, born in the Russian Federation, who, before his appointment in the government of South Ossetia in 2005, occupied various positions in Bashkiria; Mikhail Minzayev, Minister for Internal Affairs since 2005, a colonel in the Russian police, who, in 2004, during the counter-terrorist operation in Beslan, led FSB Special Unit Alpha; Anatoly Barankevich, Secretary of the National Security Council of South Ossetia since 2006 and a colonel in the Russian military forces, who participated in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and in both Chechen wars; Boris Attoyev, Chairman since 2006 of the Committee for State Security, analogue of the KGB, who previously held various positions in the Soviet KGB and who after the completing his mission in Afghanistan was appointed to the central apparatus of the FSB in Moscow; Vasily Lunev, Minister for Defence of South Ossetia since March 2008, a general in the Russian army; Vladimir Kotoyev, head of the Government Protection Service since 2007, a colonel

in the Russian army, who participated in the Chechen and Bosnian wars; and Oleg Chebotariev, head of the State Border Protection Services since 2005, a colonel in the Russian FSB. Those individuals were granted impunity by the Russian Federation from being held responsible for atrocities that they have been committing.

The Government's military action was taken in self-defence after repeated armed provocations and with the sole goal of protecting the civilian population and preventing further loss of life among residents of various ethnic backgrounds. We believe that every democratic State would have reacted in a similar fashion to protect its own citizens. The Government acted because the separatists not only defied the ceasefire but sharply escalated the violence, killing several peacekeepers and civilians within hours of the ceasefire.

Additional illegal forces and military equipment were and are entering Georgian territory from Russia through the Roki tunnel, threatening even worse violence. The separatists have also been continuing to threaten to attack other parts of the country outside the South Ossetian region, allegedly with the foreign assistance that is flowing into that region. Russian peacekeepers told Georgian officials that they were unable to control the separatists. The security situation was deteriorating and violence wais increasing rapidly. The separatists were not heeding any appeal for direct talks.

Georgia seeks a negotiated solution to the conflict, with international engagement. Our offer of autonomy in line with European standards stands, with international guarantees including an elected regional parliament, an elected regional president, shared sovereignty and the protection of South Ossetian identity, culture and language, still on the table. Until such a solution is agreed, the region, we think, should be governed by the elected head of the South Ossetian administration, Dmitry Sanakoev, an ethnic Ossetian and former separatist leader.

We invite Russia to be constructively engaged in the economic rehabilitation of the region as well as to contribute to the agreed security arrangements there. The Government's immediate goal at this point is to restore peace, to facilitate the return to normal life for all residents of the region and to allow the return of the refugees and internally displaced persons. We stand ready to ensure adequate supplies of water, electricity, food, emergency services, medical care and shelter. Separatist rebels will be eligible for amnesty. Humanitarian organizations will have access to the region, and the Georgian Government has already allocated funding totalling €2 million for the immediate humanitarian and emergency needs of the region.

According to verified reports, as we speak, a huge contingent of military personnel and equipment is illegally entering Georgia's sovereign territory through the Roki tunnel. The Russian Federation's Republic of North Ossetia has declared the mobilization of armed mercenaries to be sent to Georgia. There are disturbing signs that we are facing a calculated provocation for the purposes of escalating the situation in order to justify a pre-planned military intervention from the Russian side.

We therefore demand that the Russian Federation prevent the transit of armed mercenaries to Georgia, exercise its influence over the separatist regime to stop attacks on the civilian population and start negotiations.

As in my last address to this forum, I want to reiterate Georgia's call to the international community to explicitly condemn the continuing infringements of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian Federation. Despite this most recent escalation, I want to emphasize that the Georgian Government once again calls for, and is showing its readiness to immediately begin, peace talks aimed at resolving the conflict in South Ossetia and calls on the separatist rebels to cease their military actions and come to the negotiating table.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to take the floor.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): Before we came into this Chamber, members of the Council met in the Consultations Room. We regret that it has not yet been possible to agree on a Security Council statement on this issue. We hope that it will be possible in the days to come. But the absence of a statement tonight should not be taken as a sign that the Security Council is not engaged on this issue and is unconcerned about the direction that events are taking. On the contrary, this is a grave matter, and it is one that threatens stability and security in the region.

I would like to use this opportunity to express our serious concern at the escalation of violence in South Ossetia, Georgia. I would like to take the opportunity to call for the immediate cessation of hostilities and take the opportunity also to call on the parties to immediately resume negotiations.

We have been concerned to hear about reports of troops and other armed personnel from outside Georgia and South Ossetia moving into the region, and the United Kingdom calls on all actors in the region, whether they are State or non-State actors, not to escalate tensions and to exercise the utmost restraint at this time.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having brought the situation in South Ossetia, Georgia, to the attention of the Council at the request of the Russian Federation and of Georgia. A clear threat to peace and security is posed, and we are particularly concerned at the risk of an escalation of violence. Under these circumstances, it is legitimate and urgent that our Council should be seized of the matter. We hope that, to the greatest extent possible, the Security Council will be able to rapidly speak with one voice on the situation. France is alarmed by the serious incidents that are taking place, all the more so because in this situation of confusion the information we have indicates numerous victims on both sides.

What is certain is that for all the parties to the conflict the military option offers no way out. France therefore calls on the parties and on all those who have a decisive influence on them, first of all, immediately to cease hostilities on the ground; secondly, immediately to resume dialogue, with a view to a ceasefire by which each party must make all of its forces abide; and finally, to cooperate fully with the mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). France fully supports the search for a political solution, with respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

To conclude, I would like to recall that France currently holds the presidency of the European Union, as Council members know. The European Union very recently recalled that it was determined to spare no effort in helping the parties to attain a lasting solution.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): The United States, too, is seriously concerned by the escalation of violence in South Ossetia, Georgia. We appeal to all parties involved in this quickly changing situation to step back and to order their forces to disengage. We can conceive of no circumstances that warrant a continuation of the violence. We can accept no excuses from any party that refuses to disengage, and we assure all parties that we will value restraint and condemn aggression.

My Government has been working closely with the Russian Government in recent days in an attempt to de-escalate this situation. We welcome the cooperation of Tbilisi and Moscow earlier today in establishing a ceasefire and setting up a direct meeting of Georgian officials and South Ossetian representatives. We condemn the South Ossetians' refusal to attend this meeting or to honour the ceasefire.

We call on all parties to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Georgia. We also call on Russia to pull its troops back and not to inflame the situation by sending its forces to Georgia. Russia must cease the transport of troops and equipment through the Roki tunnel from Russia into South Ossetia. In the days ahead it is essential that the parties agree to measures to restore stability and to rejuvenate the peace process.

Mr. La Yifan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I welcome the representative of Georgia to this meeting. The current situation in South Ossetia, Georgia, is deeply worrisome. China is gravely concerned about the military conflict and about the escalation of the conflict in the region. The first imperative is to cease hostilities and, at the same time, to exercise restraint and avoid any action that may lead to an escalation of tension and harm regional peace and stability.

On 31 October 2007, at its sixty-second session, the General Assembly unanimously adopted its resolution 62/4, which relates to the Olympic Truce during this year's Olympic Games. In a few hours, the XXIX summer Olympics will be opening in Beijing. China shares the Secretary-General's wish for the parties concerned to comply with the Olympic Truce resolution. The Security Council and the international community should encourage the parties to cease the hostilities without delay, resume dialogue and make determined efforts to resolve their dispute in a peaceful manner.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): We are extremely concerned at the escalation of violence in the region of

South Ossetia, Georgia. It is particular sad to face such a scenario while in Beijing in a few hours the Olympic Games will be declared open. Once again, all the calls for a universal Olympic Truce, issued by our world body, are being blatantly ignored. Even though this conflict does not appear on the Council's agenda, we cannot dismiss our responsibilities vis-à-vis a situation that could further deteriorate and affect the stability of the entire region.

Echoing the appeals made to the parties today by the Secretary-General, by the presidency of the European Union (EU) and by the EU High Representative, we affirm that violence must immediately give way to dialogue and negotiations. The first important step is to restore the situation on the ground that existed before. Any actor who is in a position to advise the parties should exert all his influence to inspire moderation and restraint. We still see a key role for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the settlement of the conflict, but for the OSCE to play that role, weapons should first be put down and the sides should immediately resume direct talks. The latest events further demonstrate that the current situation in the conflict areas of the region is simply unsustainable.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): Viet Nam is deeply concerned about the situation in the area of conflict of South Ossetia as tensions in the region are rising. We especially regret last week's and other incidents, which led to numerous fatalities, injuries and displacements. My delegation considers that force cannot resolve the conflict, but rather will destroy all hope of finding solutions. In that spirit, we call on both Georgia and South Ossetia to exercise restraint, put an immediate end to the military activities, strictly observe the agreement on the non-resumption of hostilities and renew direct talks towards a comprehensive and durable solution to the situation and towards preventing its deterioration.

My delegation commends and supports Russia's efforts to de-escalate the tension by sending envoys to the region to restart the negotiating process aimed at finding a mutually acceptable and peaceful solution to the conflict. We believe that such initiatives are necessary to end the mounting violence and to bring the situation back under control.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia): My delegation would like to join other delegations that have expressed their grave concerns about the latest developments in Georgia, especially with regard to the current heightened tensions and the reported fighting and exchange of heavy fire between Georgian armed forces and the forces of the Georgian region of South Ossetia near the area of Tskhinvali. We note that a number of casualties have been reported on both sides. In that regard, we welcome the call of Georgian President Saakashvili for the bloodshed to end.

Croatia believes that the sides should promptly invest credible efforts to reduce tensions, including with an immediate ceasefire, so as to remove the danger of further escalation. Croatia urges all sides to refrain from any further acts of provocation and would welcome an immediate resumption of negotiations. My delegation is also concerned by reports of volunteers coming from other conflict areas of Georgia, which could have a destabilizing effect and could signal the widening of the conflict.

Croatia would like to take this opportunity to reiterate once again its support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia, which were affirmed in the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1808 (2008).

Finally, Croatia takes note of President Saakashvili's repeated offer, contained in his letter of 7 August 2008 circulated to the Security Council, in support of his peace plan from three years ago that contains almost unrestricted autonomy and local governance for the region of South Ossetia, and would welcome a return to peaceful negotiations within that framework.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): We are deeply concerned by the latest situation in Georgia. The potential for further escalation of violence is real. Almost invariably, such a spiral of violence has serious humanitarian implications for those who are vulnerable. Therefore, much is at stake. My delegation deems it important that a cessation of hostilities be established, and that the parties exercise maximum restraint, including from making inflammatory statements. While recognizing the obvious challenge, it is important that open lines of communication be established between the sides at the highest level and that confidence be established and nurtured.

In the final analysis, there is no substitute for dialogue. That open line of communication must be

coupled with tangible efforts on both sides to end the bloodshed.

At this crucial hour, it is pertinent for the Council to act collectively and in unison in expressing concern and in calling on all sides to exercise maximum restraint, to de-escalate the conflict and violence and to embark on emergency talks in a timely manner. My delegation attaches great importance to the Council's role in managing rapidly evolving crises. We therefore very much regret the fact that, despite obvious common concerns, the Council has yet to express its collective view on this very important issue.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Belgium.

Belgium would like to express its grave concern at the tension prevailing in South Ossetia, Georgia. This tension has already led to the loss of many lives and to a large number of injuries. In the face of this very worrying deterioration of the situation in the region, Belgium calls upon all parties concerned to put an end to military operations and to demonstrate moderation. Belgium calls upon the parties to accept an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and to work, with the help of international community, for a rapid resumption of dialogue.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council. I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Unfortunately, I must note that the statement by the Permanent Representative of Georgia at this evening's meeting included many distortions and contradictions. On the one hand, the representative of Georgia said that the Russian Federation is controlling everything in South Ossetia, but at the same time, he alleged that the Russian military say that they are incapable of controlling the separatists. If Russia has aggressive intentions, as the representative of Georgia alleged today, then why has the Georgian side, over a long period of time, refused to reach an agreement on the non-use of force in the Georgian-South Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, which would protect Georgia against any attempt to use force by anyone at all. From listening to the Permanent Representative of Georgia, it might appear that South Ossetian forces are attacking Tbilisi; in fact, as we all know, the situation is quite the contrary.

I would like also to comment on the point that during Security Council's prior consultations today, the Council was unable to work out a clear reaction to today's events and was unable to send an unambiguous message to both parties, primarily Tbilisi, on the need to put an end to violence and on the need to reject the use of force. The reason for the incapacity of the Security Council to develop a clear reaction to these events unfortunately lies in the absence of clear political guidelines among a number of Council members. This has been demonstrated again during this evening's discussion in our open meeting.

Let me comment on another specific point. In fact, I spoke of this in my statement today and it was also heard in the statement by the representative of the United States: that in recent days Moscow and Washington have very much been in contact. It seemed to us that there was a certain mutual understanding with our United States colleagues about the need to take steps which could put an end to the escalation of the conflict. But in her statement today in the Security Council the representative of the United States only once used the word "condemn" — and that was against South Ossetia, for its alleged failure to attend one of the proposed meetings. And yet, they failed to find clear political terms to describe the aggressive actions of Tbilisi and of the Georgian armed forces attempting to invade Tskhinvali.

It is precisely this inconsistency and this vagueness in the political position that are among the main reasons for the critical situation regarding the South Ossetian-Georgian conflict.

Nevertheless, I hope that today's meeting of the Security Council has been useful and that it will be seen by Tbilisi as indicating that the Security Council, one of the leading institutions of the international community, is not prepared to accept the attempts to resolve the long-standing Georgian-South Ossetian conflict through armed aggression.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): Very briefly, I want to reiterate a few issues which were raised by my very respected colleague, Ambassador Churkin. First of all, I probably did not make myself quite clear: I was saying that the Russian side had explained to the Georgian side that they had no control over the South Ossetian regime. That is why things were getting out of

hand. I did not say that the Russians — the Russian security and defence services — really do not have control of the armed forces of the separatist regime. I demonstrated very clearly who are the core decision-makers in the South Ossetian Government — former and current Federal Security Service (FSB) and defence officials — precisely for that reason: for the Council to understand who is really making decisions in Tskhinvali.

On the other issue, I would like to stress that we welcome the cooperation of the Russian Federation and the United States, which is now happening at a high level, to ease the tensions and to de-escalate the situation. That is exactly what Georgia wants and that is exactly what was proposed by President Saakashvili recently — last night — in a televised address. And that is exactly what we are offering our friends at the negotiating table: the State Minister for Conflict Resolution, who was willing to go, and actually went, to Tskhinvali twice to negotiate and who was rejected by the separatist regime, was bringing those same proposals.

So I would close my remarks with the hope that reason will prevail in this situation and that both sides, and the Russian Federation as well, will come to the negotiating table and will resolve this conflict in a peaceful manner.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 2 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.5952

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5952nd meeting

Friday, 8 August 2008, 4.20 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Grauls	(Belgium)
Members:	Burkina Faso	Mr. Tiendrébéogo
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Weisleder
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Georgia

Letter dated 8 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/536)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-45515 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Georgia

Letter dated 8 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/536)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Finland and Georgia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Alasania (Georgia) took a seat at the Council table; Ms. Lintonen (Finland) took the seat reserved for her at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in response to a letter dated 8 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, contained in document S/2008/536.

I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): Today, for the second time, the Council is holding a special meeting to discuss the issue related to my country. Only 12 hours ago, in this Chamber, I stated that there were disturbing signs that Georgia is facing a well-calculated provocation to escalate the situation in order to justify a premeditated military intervention from the Russian Federation. That evaluation has been transformed into a brutal reality.

Allow me to update the members of the Security Council on the extremely alarming developments that are taking place in Georgia now.

This morning, the Russian Federation started a full-scale military invasion of Georgia. Here is an outline of the events that took place today, and we have provided a map for members, to vividly illustrate the places on sovereign Georgian territory that were bombed by the Russian Federation.

At 5.30 a.m., the first Russian troops entered South Ossetia through the Roki tunnel, passed Java, crossed the Gufta bridge and moved towards Tskhinvali.

At 9.45 a.m., according to witnesses from the local population, a military fighter plane dropped approximately three to five bombs near the village of Shayshvebi, 300 or 500 metres from Georgian military radar.

At 10.30 a.m., Russian Su-24 bombers bombed the village of Variani, in the Kareli district; seven civilians were injured.

At 10.50 a.m., six Su-24 bombers entered Georgian territory from the Roki pass. At 10.57 a.m., two of them dropped three bombs in Gori. One of them fell near a stadium, the second near the other slope, and the third near an artillery brigade.

At 11.45 a.m., four Su-24s entered from the direction of the Russian Federation, Kazbegi region, on the Georgian side. Two of them passed Tbilisi and made two circles around Marneuli. The other two made a circle above Gudauri.

At 11.45 a.m., the civil aviation emergency service reported that they had received signals from a crashed flying object — presumably a Russian fighter plane — near the Iuri range, 17 kilometres south of Gori.

By 12 noon, eight Georgians — six military and two civilians — had died, and 87 were injured. One military truck with ammunition was destroyed.

At 12.05 p.m., one Su-24 entered Georgian air space from Russia and remained over Tskhinvali until 12.15.

At 3.05 p.m., a Russian military plane entered Georgia from the direction of Tedzami, dropped two bombs at the Vaziani military airport and turned back.

Russian aviation also bombed the Marneuli and Bolnisi military bases. Two aircraft were destroyed on the ground. Several buildings were also destroyed, and there were casualties. At 5 p.m., the Marneuli military base was bombed for the second time, causing fatalities. At 5.35 p.m., the Marneuli military base was bombed for the third time, resulting in one dead and four injured. As a result of the three bombings, three An-2 planes and military vehicles stationed there were destroyed.

It became known to the Government of Georgia that, on 8 August 2008, a large amount of heavy military equipment and personnel belonging to the Russian Federation illegally entered the territory of Georgia through the Roki tunnel. The Russian side openly declared that the task of those military units was to support the criminal regime of Tskhinvali in the fight against the Government of Georgia. In order to justify its actions, the Russian Federation is speculating that Georgian authorities are targeting the positions of Russian peacekeepers. Nothing could be further from the truth. I can say with full responsibility that Georgian troops are not targeting peacekeepers. I want to stress that the Government's actions were taken in self-defence after repeated armed provocations and with the sole goal of protecting the civilian population and preventing further loss of life among the region's residents, who are of various ethnic backgrounds.

The world is witnessing a direct and open violation of universally recognized norms and principles of international law. Russia is openly challenging the international community and jeopardizing established international order and stability in the wider trans-Caucasus. The Russian military aggression is intended to subdue Georgia and make it give up its Euro-Atlantic aspirations, to make Georgia and the region succumb to Russian political influence and to destroy all the democratic achievements accomplished by our country and the international community in recent years.

We demand that the Russian Federation immediately terminate the aerial bombardments, immediately pull out the occupying forces and, together with the relevant international actors, negotiate a ceasefire and mechanisms to ensure lasting peace and stability in this part of Georgia. President Saakashvili is offering direct dialogue with the Russian Federation and other interested parties to seek a negotiated solution to this tragic conflict. We are grateful to the European Union, to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and to other international actors for their readiness to engage.

As we are having this discussion, the city of Tskhinvali is under heavy shelling and air bombardment from Russian military forces.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am compelled to state that Georgia is continuing its treacherous attack on South Ossetia. That is occurring despite the appeal of the Russian leadership for an immediate ceasefire, an end to this fratricidal conflict and a resumption of the negotiating process. This situation has become possible as a result of, inter alia, the connivance of a number of Security Council members, which blocked last night's assessment of the ongoing tragedy, provided in the document submitted by Russia.

The aggression has been carried out in violation of the fundamental principle of the Charter of the United Nations concerning the non-use of force. The 1996 Memorandum on Measures to Provide Security and Strengthen Mutual Trust between the Parties to the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict — signed by the Georgian and South Ossetian parties with the participation of not only the Russian Federation and the Republic of North Ossetia, but also the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) — as well as the basic agreement signed in 1992 between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia on the principles of settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, obliged the belligerent parties to take measures to halt the military confrontation, to observe a ceasefire and to withdraw all armed units from the corridor along the line of contiguity. Under the agreement, a demilitarized zone was established.

The 1996 Memorandum states, in its paragraph 1, "The parties to the conflict shall renounce the use or threat of use of force". That document was signed by the High Representative of Georgia and the representative of the OSCE. I wish to refer to the particular political responsibility of OSCE member States to comply with the Memorandum. Georgia has used force and thus has violated the Memorandum and the demilitarized zone established under the 1992 agreement.

As all of us could see on our television screens today, Tbilisi is using heavy artillery and heavy materiel and, in essence, has launched an aggressive action against the people of South Ossetia. What is occurring is a massive bombardment of residential areas in Tskhinvali and in towns outside the South Ossetian zone of conflict. In Tskhinvali, schools, the university, the Ministry of Culture and the parliament have been set ablaze. The town where the peacekeepers have been living has been destroyed. Targeted bombing has been carried out against a Russian convoy carrying humanitarian assistance, and there are reports of ethnic cleansing in villages in South Ossetia.

The population is panicking, and there are a growing number of refugees, who are attempting to flee in order to save their lives and those of their children and other loved ones. A humanitarian catastrophe is in the making. Tbilisi is using scorched-earth tactics: a number of towns in South Ossetia have been totally destroyed. According to some reports, Georgian snipers are not allowing ambulances to go through and are preventing medical personnel from doing their life-saving work. The situation is so catastrophic that the International Committee of the Red Cross has requested a humanitarian corridor for emergency evacuation of the wounded. According to reports from the South Ossetian side, more than 1,400 people have died as a result of the fighting in Tskhinvali alone.

This cannot be described as anything other than a gross violation of international law, in particular the obligation to protect civilians from dangers related to military operations. We must not forget that, in cases not covered by international agreements carrying international humanitarian law, civilians and combatants remain under the protection and the force of the principles of international law arising from customary practices, humanitarian principles and the requirements of public awareness.

In this situation, the most vulnerable groups are children, women, the elderly and the disabled, whose lives, health and well-being are gravely threatened. Not only are Georgia's attacks against innocent civilians and its destruction of schools and hospitals gross violations of the norms of international humanitarian law; they also violate fundamental human rights.

Over the past week, the Russian Federation has continued to receive refugees from South Ossetia. However, tens of thousands of innocent civilians remain in the conflict zone. Those circumstances dictate the logic of the steps to be taken by us now. We will not allow the deaths of our compatriots to go unpunished. As Council members are aware, many of the people living in South Ossetia are citizens of the Russian Federation, and those who are guilty will be duly punished. I should also like to report that today, the President of Russia instructed the Government to take urgent measures to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and other innocent civilians in desperate situations.

All the points that I have made about what Tbilisi is doing have been reaffirmed by our often-repeated warnings to the international community: we must finally stop turning a blind eye to the massive acquisition of offensive weapons that Georgia has been carrying out over the past few years. Now we see that those weapons and the special commandos who have been trained by foreign instructors are being put to use by the Georgian leadership.

Georgia's actions have also caused casualties among Russian peacekeepers. The situation has even reached the point where peacekeepers from the Georgian side have shot at Russian peacekeepers, with whom they are mandated to carry out their peacekeeping mission in the region. Today in South Ossetia, innocent civilians, women, children and the elderly — many of whom, I repeat, are citizens of the Russian Federation — are dying. We cannot tolerate a situation in which Russian citizens and peacekeepers, who have been risking their lives for years to keep the peace in the South Ossetian conflict zone, are suffering. The firepower of tanks, military combat vehicles and helicopters is being aimed directly at peacekeepers. As a result, more than 10 peacekeepers have died, and more than 30 have been injured.

As members of the Council are aware, peacekeeping forces should not be put at risk as a result of actions by parties to an armed conflict. We believe that Georgia, having carried out this attack on Russian peacekeepers, has demonstrated blatant disregard for the norms of international law.

Now it is clear why, for many months, Georgia rejected our urgent proposal that it sign a legally binding document on the non-use of force to settle the South Ossetian conflict. Indeed, it has refused and continues to refuse to sign a similar document

regarding the Abkhaz conflict. The President of Georgia said that demanding his signature on such a document was absurd, because Georgia does not use force against its own people. Now it appears that it does. How can we not recall the responsibility to protect that we hear so much about in the United Nations?

All of this calls into question Georgia's viability as a State and its viability as responsible member of the international community. The President of the Russian Federation today unambiguously emphasized that Russia will not allow the deaths of our compatriots to go unpunished, and that the lives and dignity of our citizens, wherever they are, will be protected, in accordance with the Constitution of Russia and in accordance with the laws of the Russian Federation and international law.

We particularly regret the fact that the President of Georgia has proclaimed on television his resolve to continue what he has begun. That is all taking place not only against the backdrop of the Georgian flag but against the backdrop of the flag of the European Union as well.

We hope that our European colleagues and our American colleagues, who in recent weeks have been in active contact with us and who apparently were taking some steps to prevent this situation shifting to a hot phase, will start to understand what is going on: we hope that they will draw the right conclusions from this. We recently heard the a Georgian Government Minister, Mr. Yakobashvili, say that Russia should intervene as a real peacekeeper. Well, that is precisely what we are doing now.

I should like once again to emphasize that Russia was present and continues to be present on the territory of Georgia on an absolutely legal basis, pursuant to our peacekeeping mission in accordance with the international agreements that were reached. We continue to deem the main task here to be the maintenance of peace. Historically, Russia was the guarantor of the security of the peoples of the Caucuses, and it will remain so.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to take the floor.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): France greatly deplores the fact that since our meeting this morning the situation has considerably worsened. It is unacceptable to hear reports of destruction, of bombings, of general mobilizations and of foreign interventions. We have a simple message for the Ossetians, the Georgians and the Russians: there is no way out through the military option. Nothing can be gained by a fait accompli policy for either side. Such an approach is unrealistic because it will only succeed in opening deep wounds and compromise the only way out: the peaceful definition of the status of South Ossetia within the internationally recognized borders of sovereign Georgia.

Combat must stop immediately. We call on the parties to resume the path of negotiations without delay. In this regard, the European Union (EU) is in close contact with all of the protagonists in the crisis. Under the French presidency, the EU spare no efforts to pursue these discussions. It has been decided that Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe envoys as well as envoys from the European Union and the United States will go to Georgia to attain a ceasefire as soon as possible. We call upon the parties to cooperate fully with them to arrive at a lasting solution.

Finally, the fighting of recent days has dozens of deaths, hundreds of wounded and thousands of refugees and displaced persons. Everything possible must be done to help those who have fled their homes find shelter, receive care and return quickly to their homes. We cannot add to the tragic nature of this fighting by creating a humanitarian tragedy. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to ensure that that does not happen.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): We expressed our concerns last night when we met on this same subject, and those concerns have only increased today with the disturbing news of an escalation in the fighting and of further casualties, including those involving civilians. The situation on the ground in unclear, but it is nevertheless dangerous and volatile. Among the events of today, we have seen reports of the arrival of armed personnel from other regions, reports of the bombardment of Georgian positions elsewhere on Georgian territory by Russian fighter-bombers and reports of the passage of ground forces from Russia through the Roki tunnel. The fighting continues, and it

is a threat to peace and security in the region and beyond.

We support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and I would like to take this opportunity to call on all members of the Security Council and other colleagues to reaffirm that. I would also like to take the opportunity to reiterate calls for a ceasefire and for withdrawal. We look to the Georgians, the Russians, the South Ossetians and other fighters to desist from violence and to use all means to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers and of civilians.

Humanitarian assistance cannot be used as a pretext for the presence of non-Georgian troops, and a return to the status quo ante, which is obviously desirable, must be such that it too is effective on non-Georgian as well as Georgian forces. We also call for international engagement in a South Ossetian peace process.

My Government is pleased to support the efforts outlined by the representative of France, speaking for the European Union, setting forth what is happening on mediation from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, and I commend those efforts to the Security Council. We will continue to support them.

Mr. La Yifan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China listened carefully to the statements made by Ambassador Alasania of Georgia and Ambassador Churkin of the Russian Federation. The current situation in South Ossetia, Georgia, is very worrisome. China is gravely concerned about the military conflict in the region. It is urgent that the parties achieve an immediate ceasefire and refrain from any actions that might escalate tensions. The parties to the conflict should immediately resume dialogue and should peacefully settle their dispute.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): We understand that the situation on the ground has considerably worsened since our meeting last night. As indicated a few hours ago in an official statement, the Italian authorities are following with deep concern the crisis situation in the Georgian region of South Ossetia in close coordination with ours European partners and other allies.

We call on all parties to immediately cease all acts of violence and to ensure a lasting cessation of hostilities. We strongly encourage the resumption of negotiations in order to achieve a political solution to the issue respecting the sovereignty and territory integrity of Georgia. We deplore the fact that not only does the Olympic Truce remain unheeded, but so did the appeals made yesterday by several actors, including the Secretary-General and many members of the Security Council.

Reportedly, the situation has indeed deteriorated, and the crisis has broadened. We are seriously concerned at the reports of high numbers of casualties, including among civilians and peacekeepers. We have also learned with deep concern about the displacements of population. We call for full respect for international humanitarian law by all parties, including in the area of the protection of civilians. Humanitarian access must be granted fully and immediately.

We appreciate all the diplomatic efforts being undertaken at all levels to defuse the crisis, with particular mention of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United States and the European Union, which are sending envoys to the area. We reiterate our full support for the OSCE mission to Georgia and condemn the shelling of its premises. The parties must lend their full cooperation to the mission.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia): Croatia would like to reiterate the grave concerns that it expressed last night at the meeting on Georgia with respect to the developments in that country. News agencies have given us reports of heavy fighting between Georgian armed forces and the forces of the Georgian region of South Ossetia, as well as Russian armed forces and peacekeepers near the regional capital of Tskhinvali.

We have taken note, with extreme concern, of reports from both the news media and the Georgian side that Russian armed forces, reinforced with tanks and other military equipment, have crossed into the Georgian territory of South Ossetia, and possibly elsewhere. Although we understand and welcome the Russians' role as peacekeepers and their call for a cessation of hostilities and a return to diplomacy, that cannot be a justification for the violation of Georgia's territory, integrity and sovereignty.

Croatia is particularly concerned by some statements coming from authorities in the region on the possibility of an outbreak of open war between Georgia and Russia. Public statements that Russia must protect the life and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they are can have far-reaching ramifications not limited to

the present conflict. Moreover, we know that there is an increasing number of casualties on all sides, including members of Georgia's armed forces and Russian peacekeepers, as well as civilians in and around the conflict zone.

Croatia strongly believes that the sides should promptly agree to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and refrain from further acts of provocation, to be followed by a return to the negotiating table. In that regard, Croatia supports the efforts of the European Union, announced on 8 August 2008, to establish an immediate ceasefire in the conflict zone, as well as the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and others to that same end. We support the ongoing activities of the OSCE in that region of Georgia, including, if appropriate, as a possible mediator between the sides.

Let me conclude, as some other delegations did at last night's meeting on this subject, and as was also expressed by the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, that Croatia would welcome the observance of the Olympic Truce by all sides, as was urged in the consensus General Assembly resolution 62/4 of October 2007.

Ms. Qwabe (South Africa): South Africa is deeply concerned by the developments over the past few days, which have seen the breakdown of negotiations and an escalation of violence between Georgia and South Ossetia. Those developments have a destabilizing impact on the region and have contributed to the deterioration of relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation.

South Africa denounces the use of force and urges all parties to the conflict to cease hostilities and commence negotiations without delay. It is necessary to find a solution to this long-standing dispute in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, including the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): The United States is deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation and the resort to violence in the South Ossetia region of Georgia that has taken place over the past several days. The underlying problems in the South Ossetia region have a long history and need to be addressed through appropriate diplomatic and political channels.

However, the situation has seen an even more dangerous downturn with the introduction of additional Russian forces into South Ossetia and with Russian air and missile attacks against Georgia. That raises serious concerns about the commitment of Russia to respect Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as questions about ultimate Russian intentions and objectives. We are profoundly troubled by these developments, and we regret the resulting loss of life and numerous casualties among innocent civilians.

We call on Russia to cease attacks on Georgia by aircraft and missiles, to respect Georgia's territorial integrity and to withdraw its ground combat forces from Georgian soil. The violence that has taken place must stop in order to avert further escalation and loss of life in Georgia — escalation of a conflict that affects not only Georgia but the wider region. What has been happening in the past days in Georgia clearly poses a threat to international peace and security that affects all of us around this table.

For those reasons, the United States calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities by all parties to avert further risk of escalation and to stop the suffering for the people of the region. That cessation should lead to a restoration of the status quo ante by all concerned.

My Government is working actively with others to secure a ceasefire. We also support international mediation to calm the situation. We seek Russia's support for these efforts. We call on the parties to show the utmost restraint and to refrain from actions that would further inflame the situation. We also call on all parties to facilitate access for humanitarian assistance.

Let me close by reiterating a fundamental tenet of this Council's engagement on issues that affect Georgia: support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): Since the Council last convened, in the early hours of this morning, developments in South Ossetia, Georgia, have not turned for the better. On the contrary, as we feared, the international community is witnessing a further escalation of violence and a serious deterioration of the security situation. The attendant humanitarian consequences, as we also anticipated, are unfortunately becoming evident.

We very much regret that the Council missed an opportunity to pronounce itself clearly and with a

single voice on this unfolding grave situation earlier this morning. We must not miss that opportunity again. It is essential that we express our deep concern at the escalation of violence in South Ossetia, Georgia. It is vital that the Council call on all the parties to cease hostilities, de-escalate tensions and demonstrate a preference to resolve the dispute through dialogue and negotiations rather than through the use of arms. The stakes are clearly enormous: peace and stability in the region and, not least, the safety and well-being of vulnerable civilians.

We call on all conflicting parties to exert extra efforts to protect civilians and spare them from the harm of armed violence and, thus, avert the outbreak of a humanitarian crisis. In short, it is incumbent upon the Council to mobilize its positive and collective power of persuasion and to encourage all the parties to exercise restraint and resume negotiations. That ought to come sooner rather than later.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): We regret that following the emergency meeting of the Security Council earlier today, the intense fighting in the South Ossetian conflict zone is escalating to a new level. My delegation once again calls upon the parties to exercise restraint, renounce the use of force and expeditiously resume direct talks to end the hostilities.

We commend and support the international efforts to help defuse the situation, restart peace talks and facilitate the rehabilitation process. We will continue to work with the other Council members to ensure that the Council responds in a timely way to the current dramatic developments in the South Ossetian zone of conflict, with a view to de-escalating tension and bringing the parties to the negotiating table.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): What we have heard at this meeting from the representatives of the Russian Federation and of Georgia clearly demonstrates the deterioration of the situation and its serious implications for international peace and security. My country wishes to express its deepest regret at the outbreak of violence in the region. We particularly regret the large number of casualties among civilians and peacekeepers.

We call for an immediate ceasefire and a return to the pre-conflict situation. We call for peaceful negotiations and an end to provocation. We express the hope that the Security Council will stand up and send a strong message commensurate with the gravity of the situation that has exploded in the region.

Mr. Weisleder (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is extremely concerned about the serious events that have been taking place in Georgia since yesterday. In particular we regret the harm caused to innocent civilians. We call on all parties to halt military action and declare a simultaneous, immediate and permanent cessation of hostilities. We call upon the parties to resume their contacts and their political negotiations with a view to finding a settlement of their dispute and of any conflict between them, without preconditions. We reaffirm our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. We urge the parties to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance to all who have been affected, wherever they may be on Georgian territory.

Mr. Arias (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like other delegations that have taken the floor, the delegation of Panama is concerned at the situation of violence prevailing in South Ossetia and other regions that are part of Georgia.

But of greatest concern is the fact that the Security Council has been unable to reach agreement and understanding regarding questions of fact. The versions offered today of events in South Ossetia are considerably divergent, but they have both been accepted by the Council. Nonetheless, along with others, Panama appeals for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to the status quo ante in order to facilitate peaceful negotiations.

Mr. Tiendrébéogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Burkina Faso is deeply concerned at the escalation of violence in South Ossetia, which has already claimed numerous victims. We urgently appeal to the parties to observe an immediate cessation of hostilities. We urge them to favour dialogue in order to reach a negotiated settlement of their dispute, and we encourage the mediation efforts that are under way.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Belgium.

Belgium voices its grave concern at the tension now reigning in South Ossetia, Georgia, which has already claimed numerous lives and caused a great number of injuries. In view of this very serious deterioration of the situation in the region, including in

the humanitarian area, Belgium urges all parties concerned to halt military operations and display moderation. We appeal to the parties to agree to an immediate, unconditional ceasefire and to work, with the assistance of the international community, to speedily resume their dialogue.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I take the floor as representative of the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The Chairman-in-Office has expressed grave concern about the deterioration of the situation in the South Ossetia region of Georgia. The OSCE fully supports the territorial integrity of Georgia. We urge an end to all violence and military action. Any further escalation of the situation would have a devastating impact on the region, as well as on international peace and security. We urge the Georgians, South Ossetians and Russians to cease fire, end military action and stop further escalation.

We are extremely concerned about the reports of movements of heavy weapons in the area. We are seriously concerned at and deplore the loss of life. We call on all parties to prevent further civilian casualties.

The OSCE chairmanship has reacted to the situation in the following ways. The Chairman-in-Office, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, is in constant contact with the parties to the conflict and other international actors and has issued a statement calling for an immediate halt of military action and the re-establishment of contacts between the parties. The chairmanship convened an extraordinary OSCE Permanent Council meeting in Vienna earlier today. The OSCE office in Tskhinvali has been evacuated. The Special Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office is travelling to Georgia. The Chairman-in-Office is also planning to visit Georgia in the very near future.

The OSCE will continue to work intensively with all parties to defuse tensions. The OSCE's work and mandate must be respected by all parties to the conflict.

At this point I would also like to mention the importance of close coordination between the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union in resolving the crisis.

I would like to conclude by regretting once more the outbreak of the current hostilities. We urge an immediate end to all military action and call for restraint from all parties.

The President (*spoke in* French): The representative of Georgia has requested the floor to make another statement, and I call on him now.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): I want to express my gratitude to the members of the Security Council, who are truly concerned about the situation and the deterioration in Georgia.

First, I would like to make a few comments, on the statement of the Russian Federation's representative, and then I have to make an urgent statement because I have received a phone call from my Foreign Minister with more urgent and disturbing news.

It was appalling to hear the Russian Federation representative talking about the ethnic cleansing supposedly perpetrated by the Georgian armed forces. I want to remind the Council and Ambassador Churkin that it is the Russian Federation that really was and is supporting militarily the regime in Tskhinvali and Sukhumi, who are the perpetrators of the ethnic cleansing, which has been confirmed by numerous declarations of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and General Assembly documents.

At the same time, I was surprised that there was no mention in the Russian Federation representative's remarks of any of the bombing incidents which occurred overnight and during the day, because they are exactly the reason why we have all gathered here to elaborate on these tragic, criminal, aggressive acts from the Russian Federation side.

Now, I would like to add to my statement by saying that right now, as we speak, Russian bombers are bombing the Poti port, which is the western port of Georgia, as well as the Senaki airfield, which was bombed numerous times today. And of course, it was anticipated from my side that we would have some kind of provocation cropping up in Abkhazia as well: we are seeing the bombardment of the Kodori region of upper Abkhazia. I have been told that there is confirmed information that the bombers are in the air

and are headed in the direction of Georgia, so this is still continuing.

This is a very serious matter. I understand that the Russian Federation is a permanent member of the Security Council, but the facts that I presented to Council members today and credible media reports — not the reports of the propaganda media of the Russian Federation, which use exactly the wording that is familiar from that representative's remarks, but credible reports — are saying that we are at war. I understand that the Russian Federation is a permanent member. It is very hard to counter or oppose a permanent member in the Security Council. But what I ask of the Council is a very solid statement to the Government of the Russian Federation, as well as to the opposing parties, that these kinds of actions should stop. The bombardment of the sovereign territory of Georgia should stop, and we call for an immediate ceasefire. I truly hope that most, if not all, Council members will agree with this and will make judgements based on the information that was produced today by the Georgian side and by members of the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Georgia for his declaration. The representative of the Russian Federation has requested the floor to make another statement, and I call on him.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Permanent Representative of Georgia has said that he is surprised that in my statement I used the words "ethnic cleansing". How else can we describe it when during the course of today a town of 70,000 inhabitants is being destroyed? What else can we call it when hospitals, schools and residential areas are being destroyed, when scores of thousands of refugees are leaving the Republic? How can you describe these actions by a country that is trying to operate by using the language of international law and that is appealing to the international community to protect its interests?

I believe that it would be very difficult to get to the bottom of the details described by the representative of Georgia and that it is quite difficult to take anything that he has said on trust. What is the real worth of the slander that the Georgian armed forces are not targeting Russian peacekeepers, when we know very well that quite the reverse is the case. When the headquarters of the Russian peacekeepers was directly targeted, people were killed, and people were wounded in that attack. How can you unleash such slaughter, such carnage, on a territory which is considered to be the territory of Georgia, and then pretend to be offended when you hear this perfectly clear term that describes the actions by the Georgian side in this situation?

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of Georgia has asked for the floor to make further statement, and I call on him now.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): In response, when I made a statement that Georgian authorities never targeted the Russian Federation's peacekeepers, that means that we never targeted the peacekeepers. Those who were targeted were mercenaries from the Russian Federation and also those who were actually shooting at and shelling Georgian positions and the Georgian civilian population. But, as I mentioned, it is true — and members can verify this through their own sources back in Georgia — that Georgia never targeted the peacekeepers on the ground.

Now, in terms of ethnic cleansing, yes, I was appalled — and again, I want to reiterate that we do not want to go into too many details today because there is an urgent need to stop the violence today — at the Russian Federation President's decisions to legitimize the separatist regimes, who were perpetrators of ethnic cleansing. This is a matter of great concern, and it has been discussed numerous times at the Security Council. Unfortunately, there was a strong statement from Security Council members, but the decision was never reversed. We are seeing today the methodical occupation and invasion of Georgian territory, which has occurred over these past months. We have to react, together with the Security Council. As I mentioned, Georgia stands ready to cooperate when the international community, international observers, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union — and the United Nations, of course — to facilitate this kind of ceasefire and to be bound by it.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make another statement, and I call on him now.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): I take the floor to highlight one issue. I think almost everyone who has spoken this afternoon has highlighted the importance of ceasing the fighting — of a ceasefire. I

note that the representative of Georgia has said that Georgia is ready to accept a ceasefire, but my Russian colleague's statement was silent on the issue of the need for an immediate end to the violence and for accepting a ceasefire. I believe that it is very important that the message go out, loud and clear from here, that there has to be a ceasefire. We understand that there are issues separating the parties, and we want those issues to be addressed. But what is needed is an end to the violence.

Therefore, there has to be a cessation of violence, and we urge the Russian Federation to join what appears to be a consensus for a cessation of violence — for a ceasefire. I believe that this is something that we can all come together on. It would send the right message to the people of Georgia and would put us on the path to dealing with the issues, which several colleagues — almost everyone, including our Russian colleague — have raised and that need to be addressed.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked make further statement, and I give him the floor.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Who would object to a ceasefire? Who would object to peace? Of course, peace is better than war. But unfortunately, in this kind of situation, you cannot just get away with slogans. You need a serious political analysis of the situation. You not only need an appeal to cease combat; you need to state that agreements have been violated, agreements that have maintained the peace in that conflict area over the past 14 years. You need demands to be met and the situation returned to that which existed before the start of Tbilisi's aggressive actions against South Ossetia. That would be a serious political approach. But simply to present fine slogans in these meetings and then do everything you can to nod indulgently at Tbilisi is not the way that will lead to a settlement of this very acute, very dangerous conflict situation.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of Georgia has asked for the floor to make a further statement, and I call on him now.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): First of all, I would like to address one question to my colleague, Ambassador Churkin: Are you ready to stop the fighter jets that are in the air, which will soon be bombing my comrades in Georgia?

What will the Security Council do about this now? How are we going to address this? We all know that those bombers are in the air and that they are about to bomb the civilian population indiscriminately, as they have been doing for an entire 24 hours. What are we going to do? That is my question to Council members.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement, and I now give him the floor.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Of course, this meeting of the Security Council is not the best place for an exchange of questions and answers between one Permanent Representative and another, but there is an answer to that question.

For a start, the Georgian authorities could state that they intend, in the future, to abide by the agreements that, I repeat, have maintained peace in that conflict zone for 14 years. For a start, they could say that they do intend to go back to the status quo ante as it was before the military action began. For a start — and I am not talking about more serious responsibilities they bear — they could apologize very seriously for the irresponsible and hasty actions taken by the Georgian authorities, which have caused many thousands of people to be killed and have caused the capital of South Ossetia to be destroyed in the past 24 hours. That would be a start. We could then continue the discussion, after that.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.